



MAYO COLLEGE, AJMER.

FIFTY-TWO
STORIES OF THE SEA

BY FRANK T. BULLEN, HAROLD BINDLOSS,
FRANK SHAW, THE EDITOR, ETC.

EDITED AND COMPILED BY
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PREFACE

THERE is but little for me to say, in presenting this collection of tales. They must speak for themselves, and I think they will bear witness that I have been at considerable pains in selecting and writing them. There are many true stories among them, most of which I have preferred to relate in my own language, and with such explanations as appeared necessary in the matter of seamanship, geography, etc., though I have not claimed credit for their authorship.

The original stories under my name are mostly based upon fact, or derived from incidents within my own experience. "Mr. Green," for example, was a real personage, and quite as great a scoundrel as he is represented to be in this story.

I have not attempted any grouping of the stories under various headings, but have let them come at random, except in one or two instances where the observance of a certain sequence is necessary. My idea about a volume of this kind is that a boy should be able to take it up and open it anywhere, without failing to find something that will arrest his attention, whether in the way of tragedy, comedy, gallant feats of arms, or what not.

It is inevitable, I think, that tragedy should predominate; the somewhat monotonous routine of sea-life is more, far more

frequently broken in upon in this fashion than by amusing incidents ; but this will not, I trust, detract from the merits of the book in the estimation of its readers.

I have duly acknowledged elsewhere my indebtedness to various proprietors of copyright ; and I have to thank Mr. Frank Bullen for his kindness in smoothing the way for me with regard to the acquisition of his very interesting story.

E. P. STATHAM.

September, 1910.

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FIFTY-TWO STORIES OF THE SEA

THE END OF THE SLAVER "MARIQUITA"

BY HAROLD BINDLOSS

ONE sweltering morning of the dry season, a white man-of-war's gig crept slowly across the sun-lit swell, parallel to a line of spouting reefs on the Slave Coast of Western Africa. A short distance to seaward, a little paddle-wheel gunboat lay wallowing on the steep-sided undulations that hove the boat aloft, and then, curling over into glittering green walls, burst across the barrier beneath a cloud of spray.

It was fiercely hot, and the gunboat's young commander leaned back in the stern-sheets of the gig, carefully glancing ahead.

Beyond the chaos of spouting surf there lay a sheet of still, green water, fringed by a beach of sand gleaming an intense yellow in the sun-glare. Behind this again a dreary waste of mangrove swamps with the mist rising like steam above them stretched away into the hazy distance.

"A fine place for shipping slaves inside there," the officer said. "That must be where Hernandez gets his cargoes, and there's probably a river-mouth at hand. Hallo! Surely that's a buoy. Give way, men!" The oars dipped, and presently the boat slid across a narrow streak of unbroken, rolling green, with the creaming surf on either hand. A keg lay bobbing on the backs of the rollers in its centre, and the commander said, "No trading vessel ever comes here. It must be a slaver's buoy,

and I rather think they line it with that dead cottonwood ashore to mark something. Break in the head !”

The oar-butts rose and fell on the head of the dancing keg, and a brawny bluejacket thrust it sideways. A gurgling sound followed, and then its heavy chain dragged the cask down and down through the crystal water.

“Hernandez will need another mark,” the commander said grimly ; and, as he spoke, a roller larger than usual swung the gig sharply aloft. Then there was a sudden thunderous roar hard by, and, right in the centre of the deeper water, a vast column of spray shot up, as it were from the bottom of the sea, and a solid mass of foam leapt after it.

“I never saw anything like that before,” the commander said ; and the bluejackets looked curiously at one another. Then an old gunner, who knew the coast well, proceeded to explain. “There’s many of them sunk rocks along here, sir,” he said. “Maybe there’s two fathom on top, and the smaller rollers pass smooth, but the first big one with a deep trough catches it—an’ it spouts like that. A cruel place to strike, sir.”

“That explains the buoy. We’ve seen enough. Round with her, and back to the ship,” the officer said.

The gunboat resumed her journey to Elmina, and then came back eastwards again. Why the authorities, when they found her too old and slow for general service, should have sent her out to Africa to catch the fastest sailing ships afloat—the Spanish and Portuguese slavers—they only knew themselves ; but the slaver captains chuckled.

Her commander, however, was as proud of his antiquated craft as if she had been the smartest cruiser, and spent six months’ pay upon extra paint and stores. For months he patrolled the unhealthy coast, poking into foul lagoons, where his crew caught many fevers but no slavers, and more than once it nearly broke his heart to see a suspicious vessel run clean away from his panting steamer in a moderate breeze. Still, he was a pertinacious young man, and stuck grimly to his task, hoping some day to come across a slaver in a dead calm, when she could not run away. There was one brigantine,

the *Mariquita*, that he would have given much to capture. Twice she had slipped through his fingers with a full cargo on board, and Don Marcario Hernandez, her master, was more than suspected of having caused the death of two bluejackets sent ashore with a message to a French station in the Gaboon.

A fortnight after the sinking of the buoy the little gunboat lay plunging a mile or two outside the seaward edge of the reefs, and her commander leaned over the reeling bridge-rails, straining his eyes to pierce the driving spray.

"This sou'-wester should bring up any inward bound slavers," he said to the lieutenant beside him; "and if Hernandez is off the coast, he's sure to run in to-night. But I don't like the look of the weather, and the glass is tumbling down. Our old engines would hardly drive us off shore if it freshens up much more."

The lieutenant glanced anxiously about him. Overhead ragged-edged clouds were driving across the face of the moon, which occasionally shed down a fitful gleam, and was veiled again in vapour. Below, a high, confused sea was already running, and the gunboat rolled and dived wildly into the white-topped ridges, creaking and groaning through all her length as she buried her bows to the fore-castle-head, or hove them aloft, with the sea streaming down her sides like the backwash on a half-tide rock. The decks were flooded a foot deep, and as she rolled from rail to rail there was a great uproar in one drowned paddle-casing, while the wheel on the other side spun round in free air, only the tips of its floats striking the sea. Her engines clanged loudly, though they were only running at half-speed, and a throbbing jet of steam blowing flat down from the escape-pipe told that the boilers were quivering under all the pressure they might stand.

Hour after hour the sea grew steeper and steeper and the wind increased, until the spindrift smote the watchers' faces like the lash of a whip. Shortly before the dawn, when there was nothing to be seen but flying scud and spray, the commander felt a sudden tightening of his nerves, for a sound like that of

slatting canvas reached his ears. Then the lookout forward yelled frantically, and a shadowy mass of sailcloth swept out of the gloom.

The engine-room telegraph clanged, the paddles whirled full-speed astern, and there was a confused clamour of voices as a big brigantine rushed down upon them like a train, and the two officers held their breath. Her upper topsail was thundering in loose folds, and they could see two dark figures clinging to the yard. A staysail slashed itself to pieces above the bowsprit, and men were running like ants along her deck. Then, with the foam leaping about her bows, she drove past on the top of a sea, and the commander said hoarsely, "Hernandez and the *Mariquita*!—three fathoms nearer and she would have gone through us like a knife. Clear the pivot-gun forward! The moon is coming through."

"It will be very wild shooting, but we'll do our best," the lieutenant answered. The telegraph called for "full speed"; the wheel-chains rattled, and the gunboat came round upon her heel just as the moon shone down through a rift in the driving clouds. Then they could see the brigantine running under lower topsail and half-set mainsail straight for the smother about the boiling reefs.

The long brown tube of the pivot-gun swung out across the rail, and a group of dripping figures clustered about its breech. A whirling yellow flash blazed out twenty feet beyond its muzzle, a cloud of woolly vapour blew forward over the bows, and a ringing crash set the bridge-rails quivering. Then a white fountain showed where the projectile had harmlessly struck the sea. A second shot followed, but this flew wider still, and then the brigantine came round suddenly beam to wind, and went wallowing across the sea.

The commander was puzzled for a moment, until there arose a cry from the deck below, "She's looking for the buoy!" This, however, was the gunner's opportunity. The steamer was coming rapidly down upon the slaver, which, under shortened canvas, lay rolling right athwart their course; and again the brown tube flashed fire. A cheer went up as the

moonlight showed the after-part of the brigantine's bulwarks hanging in splinters about her counter. Then there was another shout as she slowly lumbered up into the wind, and lay dipping her bowsprit, head to sea. Evidently, more by chance than skill, the shot had disabled her rudder-head or smashed the wheel.

The commander sent his voice ringing above the roar of angry waters. "Men," he said, "there's no end of prize-money drifting to destruction on the reefs. It's a risky matter, but if we could get a hawser aboard, we might tow her clear." That was all, but it was enough. Immediately the davit-falls commenced to clatter, and, when the steamer came round, a big, double-ended surf-boat sank down her lee side. Blue-jackets and ebony-skinned Krooboy deck hands leapt aboard, and with a line towing astern she rolled away, alternately hove aloft on the frothing crest or hidden in the gloomy hollows. As the commander had said, it was risky work; but a well-steered surf-boat will go through more sea than a deeply loaded steamer, and the line ran steadily out.

Meantime, the commander clung to the bridge-rails, anxiously watching the reefs draw nearer. "The send of the surf is casting us bodily to leeward," he said. "There must be a tremendous tide running in, too, or else the sou'-wester has piled the whole of the Guinea stream upon those reefs. We've not a minute to lose."

Then a cloud drove across the face of the moon, and pitchy darkness followed which seemed filled with the ringing clash of breakers roaring across the stone. Later the pale light shone down again, and a cry rose up from the gunboat's deck, "The slaver's off!" The commander set his teeth as he saw the brigantine with her upper topsail hoisted again, storming down wind, straight for the thick of the boiling smother. Then the surf-boat rose into sight on the crest of a sea, the men hauling with might and main upon the joined-up lines with which they had hoped to take the hawser on board.

Suddenly the line parted, and the steamer's crew saw the boat whirled swiftly towards the reefs, while the men seemed

to be rowing desperately to hold her back. But it was beyond all power of flesh and blood to drive her out in the teeth of that wind and sea, and the commander grew very grave as he backed the steamer down. The surf-boat was then almost within the grasp of the first of the parallel lines of rollers that thundered across the reefs, and he doubted if his old-fashioned craft would ever steam out again with current and sea against her. Nevertheless, he could not leave his men to perish—any risk better than that; and the gunboat backed deliberately down, as it were, into the very jaws of death. Then there was darkness again, black darkness above, and white darkness of sea-smoke and spray below, and the crew scarcely dared to breathe as the awful roar of the surf set their ear-drums quivering.

A hoarse cry came out of the spray; the engines stopped, and something drove grinding along the quarter. Ropes were flung down; there was a crash of splintering wood, and then dripping figures dragged themselves over the steamer's rail, and the lieutenant climbed to the bridge.

"All on board, sir," he said, panting, as the paddles turned ahead and the stove-in surf-boat swept away. "The slaver must have made his damage good, or squared his yards to commit suicide rather than fall into our hands. There's nothing we can do but drive her out to sea."

"Ay, if we can," the commander answered, half through his teeth. "Go and tell the engineer that unless he can get another ten revolutions out of her there's an end to us all this night."

The paddles pounded faster and faster, a streak of red flame streamed away from the blackened funnel, and, trembling all through, the gunboat headed for open sea. Driven as she was, she had no time to rise as a boat would have done, and when a great black wall rolled down upon her, she buried her bows in it to the foremast, and the brine swept her deck front end to end. Men hung on for dear life to whatever lay nearest, and for a moment the little steamer staggered. Then the mast of water made its own way out—through the smashed bulwarks

The End of the Slaver "Mariquita" 17

—and when she shook herself free again, everything movable had vanished from her deck. Twice or thrice this happened, and then the moon came forth again.

A flood of watery light ran along the backs of the frothing rollers, and a sudden and half-coherent cry rose from the gunboat's crew. Her lieutenant glanced astern. "Look at the slaver now!" was all he said. The commander turned his head, and for a moment forgot the peril of his own vessel, and stared fascinated at what lay before him. But a few minutes had elapsed since the parting of the line, though it seemed like hours, and meantime the brigantine had been running through the fringe of the rollers parallel to the reefs. Now, half hidden in spray, she was hove aloft on the summit of a watery hill, the second of the three deadly lines of surf; and then, with a roll that seemed to dip her foreyard, swept down into the trough until the sea astern hid half her reeling spars. Again she rose into sight, and, as the previous roller thundered majestically on, the commander saw a sudden and awful upheaval of white rend its bulk in two. A shudder ran through every limb, for he knew the sunken rock was waiting for its prey.

His face was grey when the binnacle glow fell upon it, and his voice was strained as he said, "That's the last of the *Mariquita*. Nothing under heaven could save them now."

The brigantine rose high aloft for the third time, every rope and spar sharp and clear in the moonlight as she rushed forward on the crest of the roller, a frothing wall standing a fathom high above her rail on either hand. Then she slid down until half the mainsail was hidden in the hollow, the lower topsail too; and the gunboat's commander felt his teeth meeting through his lip. Next moment that which he expected happened. A great vertical spouting of foam rose up between the two rollers, and a vast column of spray whirled aloft. A dull, grinding crash, and a clamour of voices reached his ears in spite of the gale, and then the broken wall of the roller swept on—and the *Mariquita* was gone.

"An end worthy of his life. Cheated justice at last," the
S. S.

lieutenant said, with a long breath of relief that the suspense was over; but his superior answered gravely, "No; Hernandez has gone to answer for his deeds."

Fathom by fathom the gunboat fought her way back out of the grasp of the breakers, for steel and steam and human skill conquered the raging surf at last. It was broad daylight when, swept and battered, she reached deep and safe water; and that morning the wind fell suddenly, for a gale on this coast is generally very short. Two days later, when the surf had moderated somewhat, a cutter went into the lagoon, and found the after-part of the *Mariquita* high and dry upon the beach. She had clearly been fitted with slave decks and irons, and was evidently on her way to ship a full cargo when the gunboat fell across her. But neither Marcario Hernandez nor any of his cut-throat crew were ever seen again. Murderer and semi-pirate, he had suddenly been called to account for the innocent blood he had shed; but whether he had repaired his damaged steering-gear and was attempting to escape, or, in hopeless desperation, had wilfully cast his vessel away, will ever remain a mystery.

THE WRECK OF THE "DUNBAR"

VERY few who were in Sydney on Friday the 21st of August, 1857, will forget the wreck of the *Dunbar*.

The Thursday night in the city had been rainy and rough, but not to any great extent, and the morning broke fine and clear. Little anticipation was there of any calamity at sea. Towards the afternoon, however, a rumour spread that quantities of wreckage had been met with outside the Heads, that a pilot had seen what looked like the keel of a large ship on one of the beaches, and that steamers had gone out in search of information. As the tide rose, a good deal of cargo drifted into the harbour, and among the floating goods were several corpses. The amount of wreckage showed that the vessel must have been a large one, and, judging from a few of the things that came ashore—notably a package of boys' cricket-bats, answering to an invoice forwarded in advance—it began to be suspected that the lost ship was the *Dunbar*.

Of all the clippers then on the seas for Sydney, the *Dunbar* was about the least likely to meet with disaster.

The entrance into Sydney Harbour is through a narrow break in the precipitous escarpment. On each side of the waterway the cliffs tower up to the height of over two hundred feet. On the south side the cliff-wall is unbroken, but on the north the long stretch is cut back into a narrow bay called the Gap, over whose rock-strewn floor the sea roars as if in a cauldron as the waves are dashed into foam against the perpendicular sides.

It is an old story how, when Captain Cook, after leaving Botany, was sailing along the coast for the first time, the

lookout during dinner reported a magnificent harbour on the port bow. The captain stopped to finish his meal and delayed coming on deck till the North Head was passed, and then, seeing only the Gap, refused to believe the report. The lookout, however, persisted he was right, and Cook, after a remark as to the extraordinary keenness of vision which enabled some people to see through a stone wall, dismissed the matter with, "Well, we'll put it down, and call it after you. Your name is Jackson; let your wonderful roadstead be Port Jackson!" And thus the finest harbour in the world received its name.

It was in the Gap that the wreck had happened; the captain of the lost ship had, in the darkness of the night, mistaken the North Head for the South Head, and the little bay for the harbour mouth. Immediately after the loss of the *Dunbar* an alteration was made in the lights, and it is now almost impossible to be so misled.

Crowds of people from the city went to the Heads as the evening approached to assist at the terrible scene, for far and near the waves were dotted with cargo and lumber—the sea was giving up the dead, and the sharks had gathered to the banquet. Search for the survivors had been going on ever since Pilot Hydes discovered the wreck at seven o'clock in the morning, but without success. Captain Wiseman, in the *Grafton*, who had passed through the wreckage outside and first brought the news, had been scanning the face of the cliffs, and the *Washington* was also cruising off the Gap and examining its rocks from the seaward, while from every available point along the crest of the rocky wall the landmen looked down into the gulf for a sign of human life.

Night closed in, and nothing had been seen but the dead. But in the early morning one of the watchers was peering down the precipice from a projecting crag, when he fancied something moved on the cliff face. After a little it moved again. Yes! there could be no doubt of it; it was a man's arm, and it was waving a handkerchief!

A glance through the telescope dissipated all doubt, and

the shout of "There's a man on the rocks!" brought the people together. Measures were soon taken for the rescue. A young watchmaker, Anton Wollier by name, an Iclander by birth, volunteered to take a rope down, for the man was near the water's edge, at least two hundred feet below, and a boat would inevitably have been dashed to pieces if an attempt were made from the sea.

The ropes were brought, the gallant lad was dropped over the cliff, and the waving handkerchief guided him to the ledge, on which he found the sole survivor of the *Dunbar*.

He had been on the ledge for thirty hours, and was much exhausted. Wollier shifted the rope on to him, and then, signalling to hoist away, sent him up to safety. The Iclander had fixed a second rope so as to serve as a guy, and when the sailor was released by the enthusiastic crowd above, he was himself hauled aloft. The name of the rescued man was Johnson. He was one of the able seamen of the *Dunbar*. And this is the story that he told:

The *Dunbar*, one of the finest and best equipped clippers ever launched, left England on the 31st of May, 1857.

She was commanded by Captain Green, and carried an unusually good crew. The cabin passengers, many of them people of importance in the colony, numbered thirty, and in the steerage there were thirty-three. The ship was eighty-one days out, and all had gone well. She had sighted King's Island on the 16th of August, and was off Botany on the evening of the 20th of August.

Sydney light was sighted at seven o'clock as the ship, under easy sail and close hauled on the starboard tack, was heading outwards north-east by north.

The night was dark and rainy, and the light shone very faintly as the ship edged away from the land before she wore for the run into harbour. At half-past eleven Captain Green gave the order, "All hands wear ship!" and the yards were squared as she fell off before the wind, and the two men at the wheel steered straight for the light, of which the glimmer

could just be caught through the darkness. The ship had very little canvas aloft, and was making good way with three reefs in the maintopsail and four in the fore, and as she neared the light the foresail was clewed up. The third mate was on the forecastle, and the captain sent the second mate forward to help him look out for the North Head on the starboard bow.

It was nearly midnight. There was silence on deck, for the passengers had all retired to sleep. The rain came down thicker and faster, the darkness had increased, and the light had disappeared.

"Can you see the North Head?" shouted the captain from the poop.

"No, not yet," replied the second mate from the forecastle.

On drove the devoted ship, and again the captain shouted, and again came back the answer "No!"

Again the captain began the question, but he was stopped in mid-speech by a loud shout from the second mate or "Breakers ahead!"

And at the same instant, through a rift in the darkness, Johnson saw the North Head light just over the lee mizen rigging.

"Starboard!" hissed Captain Green, and quick and sharp the orders followed, and the yards were braced round to bring the *Dunbar* up to windward. But it was too late, she had too little sail on, and made too much leeway; and in a few moments the port bow struck on the rocks below, and then bumped over on to them. Everything was done to save the ship, but in vain.

Blue lights were burnt, but were unperceived.

The seas were breaking over, and the first sea that broke stove in the boats. The mizen-mast went, then the main; the foremast stood till the last. The passengers rushed up in their night-dresses asking if there still was hope.

The ship held for a few minutes, and then the decks burst, and the *Dunbar* was shattered into a thousand pieces, and all were cast into the foaming sea.

At the first crash Johnson threw off his jacket and boots, and prepared for the worst. As the ship was breaking up he dashed below and got out of the cabin skylight to leeward, and then clambered along to the chain-plates of the fore-rigging, where he found the old boatswain and two other seamen.

The bow broke up last. The two seamen were washed away, and Johnson and the boatswain were thrown ashore amongst the timber. As the wave struck the cliff, Johnson scrambled on to a ledge; but the boatswain could go no farther, and was sucked back by the next wave. Johnson clambered to a higher ledge, and there, bruised and battered and wearied, fell asleep.

When he woke it was broad daylight. About ten yards below him was the sea, covered with the wreckage. Among the wreckage were the bodies of his late shipmates, and—more horrible sight than all—the waves were alive with the sharks which were feeding on the corpses.

Far above him, like specks against the sky, he could see the people on the cliffs, and away out to sea he could see the ships which had come out in search. He saw the *Grafton*, and signalled to her, but to no effect. He saw the *Washington*, and again he shook his handkerchief in vain. He saw a schooner, but she did not see him. He shouted and gesticulated to the people above him, but he failed to make himself visible. All that day he spent on the ledge of rock, and when night came he again slept. Early in the morning he made a desperate venture, and crawled on to a higher ledge, and from this place it was that his waving handkerchief was at length seen.

As Wollier reached the top after rescuing him, Captain Loring, of H.M.S. *Iris*, collected £10 from the crowd as a preliminary testimonial. The Mayor of Sydney, who was one of those at the ropes, gave it to him, and made a short complimentary speech. The gallant Iclander was quite overcome, and could only find words to say, in his broken English, "I did not go down for this money, but for the feelings of my heart."

A MALAY ADVENTURE

"PIRATES?" exclaimed the quartermaster, with that peculiarly wooden-faced expression we had learned to understand; "yes, I once had an adventure with them."

"Where?"

"In the Straits of Malacca."

"Spin us the yarn!" cried the watch below.

"Well," began the quartermaster, "it was at Calcutta that I joined the *Audacious* for a voyage to Hong-Kong. I forgot that she would touch at Singapore and pass through the Straits, for news had reached the Hooghly that two English vessels had been attacked and plundered by the Malay cut-throats, and I had no wish to lose the number of my mess. Our captain, however, was the man to prepare for any emergency. A quantity of muskets and cutlasses had been secured by him, also a couple of twelve-pounder guns. Fortunately Murphy, the bo'sun's mate, was a Naval Reserve man, and he undertook the training of the crew. That his was no idle berth the following remarkable incident will prove. One day an empty cask was towed abreast of the ship, and a twelve-pounder cleared for action. When all was ready, Murphy ran his eye along the gun, the match was applied, and the ball just skimmed the mark. "Well done!" said the captain. With great haste the gun was run in, sponged, loaded, and again run out. The match touched the vent, but a splutter of powder was the only result. Murphy stood amazed. "Run her in!" he cried. This was done, and Jack Connor, the leading gunner, ran the sponge down the mouth. "It won't go home," said he,

"Then fetch a policeman!" cried the jolly mate, who was an amused spectator.

Murphy glared wickedly. "Withdraw and depress!" he shouted, and the next moment Jack Connor, with a mouth as large as almost any shark's, was waltzing round the deck with his big toe gripped between both hands, and singing out, "I'm kilt!—I'm kilt!" fit to wake the dead. Into the waterways modestly dropped the ball from the gun, and it was then discovered that some one had forgotten to put in the powder.

However, between cutlass, musketry, and big-gun drill, by the time we arrived at Singapore our crew was fit to face any number of ordinary pirates.

On a certain lovely morning we began our passage of the Straits. Tack for tack the ship made rapid way, and toward evening she had nearly reached the entrance to the China Seas. Nothing to mar the voyage was now likely to occur. Just before sundown we stood over towards a large island, several miles off. If that were safely reached, the next tack would take us clear of all danger. Unfortunately, as the sun disappeared, the wind fell, and in about half an hour the lower canvas was flat against the masts, while a few cat's-paws ruffled the upper kites.

The short-lived twilight was fast deepening into night, when there arose from the bow a warning cry, "Boats right ahead, sir!"

"All right," said the quartermaster, who, glass in hand, quickly appeared on the fo'c'sle head and closely watched the suspicious-looking strangers. Then he handed his telescope to the mate. Neither spoke, but we could see in the fast-deepening night the outlines of three strange-looking craft, evidently awaiting our approach. The mate lowered the glass.

"What do you make out?" the master calmly inquired.

"Three boats full of men, sir."

"Just so."

"They may be fishing," the mate said.

"For big ships," returned the master significantly. "Square in the after-yards," he added, while going aft.

The boats were now scarcely visible, while a tide or current seemed to set us toward the island. "They think we cannot escape," the master said, "but they'll catch a tartar this time."

With perfect discipline the decks were cleared and the hands turned to supper, while the captain and officers kept a sharp lookout. The men soon reappeared. The condensing apparatus was now set going, and plenty of boiling water to use on any one attempting to board was soon ready. Grease-buckets were had out, and the lower chain-plates and dead-eyes of the rigging well smeared; while the twelve-pounders received attention, and muskets and cutlasses were piled grimly on the after-hatch. The lights were *next* doused, and from every quarter we awaited with resolute tension the approach of the foe.

In this way an hour passed, and the men then became exasperated, for the night was so intensely dark that even the closest objects could scarcely be made out.

The master and men stepped for'ard: "Men," the former said quietly, "I can no longer endure this suspense; there won't be a breeze before daylight. Those fellows ahead will attack about midnight, and if we allow them to come alongside in three separate rushes, our force will be scattered, and defeat may follow. Let us take them by surprise. If, as the mate suggests, they be harmless, well and good; but, if otherwise, let us clear them off the sea. I call for volunteers for the boats." The crew followed their commander aft. Action of any kind was preferable to the anxiety all were now enduring.

Both quarter-boats were noiselessly swung out and lowered. A picked crew was told off to each. Muskets and revolvers were carefully loaded and passed over the side; and, all being ready, the brave captain took command of the starboard cutter, while Murphy, the bo'sun's mate, directed the other. With a sign of farewell from their crews, both boats pushed off, and, under muffled oars, speedily disappeared in the darkness.

Those left on board gathered on the fo'c'sle head, every

eye strained to pierce the impenetrable darkness and every ear waiting for the faintest sound that might come across the sea. The great ship lay almost motionless. Second after second dragged on, and still no sign came from the boats. Suddenly a distant hail was followed by a flash.

The sharp rattle of musketry rolled across the deep, and our pent-up anxiety found instant relief in a wild cheer of encouragement. This was followed by a second flash, in which our comrades, standing close to repel attack, were momentarily visible. Then hoarse cries, as when men meet in deadly hand-to-hand combat, reached the ship, and then — an utter silence.

“What can have happened? What fiendish plot has overwhelmed them?”

Such were a few of the anxious queries passed whisperingly from man to man in the awe-struck group upon the bows of the *Audacious*.

A few minutes of intense anxiety were broken by the mate's stentorian voice. “Boats ahoy!” he cried, and far aloft among the sleeping canvas an echo seemed to faintly whisper — “Boats ahoy!” No answer was returned, and more than one man threw off his clothing and volunteered to swim to the boats, and, if possible, ascertain the fate of their crews.

A faint sound at length attracted attention. Something was nearing the ship. Could it be that the pirates, having destroyed their foes, were now bent on plundering the vessel? Muskets and cutlasses were seized, and we hastened to the side, determined to die hard.

By this time the outlines of two boats were made out, and our mate showed a light which was answered. Weapons were laid aside, and we rushed to the assistance of the returning crews. One by one the men climbed silently on board, laid their weapons carefully on the after-hatch, and as silently awaited the hoisting of the boats. When dismissed, all hastened for'ard, and, seizing their pipes, silently filled the fo'c'sle with dense clouds of smoke.

Perceiving on the features of Murphy a strange expression,

I sheered alongside, for he and I had always been close friends. "What is it, Tom?" I asked. He stared fixedly, shook his head, and rid himself of a huge tobacco cloud. "I'm honour bound," he said, "but I'll tell you to-morrow." Next day the Straits of Malacca were miles astern, and the yarn of that night attack was told.

"After leaving the ship," Murphy said, "we prowled round, and presently found the enemy lying close. They hadn't any notice we were so near. The skipper hailed, but receiving no reply, poured in a volley at half range. Of course I followed suit, and, cutlass in hand, dashed into the pirates.

"Through the darkness I saw a wiry-looking old sinner standing in the stern of an enemy's boat, and, when alongside, I cut at him. Next moment my weapon snapped in two. Fully half of our men had been dragged or fallen overboard, and, becoming furious at the sight, I went for that old feller's hair. If ever a man had seized a skeleton in the dark, that man was Thomas Murphy! I give you my word his arms were nothing but"—and the bo'sun's mate added in a sepulchral voice—"the—*the root of a wretched tree!* Yes, Jim," he added, "those three boats full of men turned out to be but three floating trees, and I leave it to any one who saw them if, in the deepening twilight, they weren't for all the world like boats full of men."

"I would have sworn it," I said.

"And," concluded Murphy, "it was entirely owing to the skipper's orders that we made no sign. 'If any man in these boats,' he says, standing erect, and in a voice there was no mistaking—"If any man here," says he, 'dares to open his mouth upon this matter before these Straits are out of sight, I'll stop his grog and baccy for a month.' You understand our silence now, but I was nearly bursting to tell the yarn.

"Gentlemen," remarked the quartermaster, with sphinx-like gravity, "that is the yarn of my night attack on pirates in Malayan waters. Good evening!" And with a grim smile he disappeared, while a shower of sea-boots, tin pannikins, and swabs followed closely in his wake.

A MAY DAY SAIL *

A MOST beautiful morning it was, that 27th of May, 1865. Perfect but for one thing—there was not enough wind to fill the sails of the good ship *Fortuna* as she lazily glided through the clear blue waters of the China sea. We were four days out from Hong-Kong, and quite expected to be at least half-way to Singapore. We had done the journey before in a week, and hoped to do so again.

The good ship was just out of graving dock at Whampoa, and had had such a scraping and oiling and cleaning as two years' cruising in Indian and China seas made imperative.

How proud her captain was of her that bright May day ! Little did he foresee that before the golden sun dropped behind the distant horizon she would be—— But we must not anticipate ; there will be time enough for sorrow and trouble. Let us revel in our present security, admire the ever-changing scene of sky and water, nor hurry to meet the fate so mercifully hidden from us. Could we but have known beforehand, even the strongest and stoutest-hearted men on board had quailed at the prospect. Before six o'clock that same sunny day I had seen a man, to whom the word "fear" was as the Greek language, pale to the very lips with horror.

* This story is said to have been narrated by a lady, who wrote : " The facts as given are absolutely correct in every respect. The day, the month, the year, were as given, and the name of the ship alone is slightly altered. I have often been asked to write an account of that terrible time, but have not cared to do so hitherto." Making every allowance for the author being a woman and not a seaman, and writing after two-and-twenty years had elapsed, the few discrepancies and inaccuracies which may be detected by a seaman are insignificant.—ED.

On the starboard side loomed, fifteen miles off, the almost unexplored island of Hainan, the home and nest of Chinese pirates. At no time is a sailor an admirer of Hainan, nor wishful to get too close to it, but a good breeze always blows off the land, which does not extend very far out to sea, so that it is quite worth while sailing as close as possible for the chance of getting a blow which will send one spinning along for many a mile. I heard many a consultation that day as to the advisability of "hugging" the land more. One grey-haired officer said No—decidedly no; another could see no danger in doing so; while the fearless captain laughed at the idea of pirates attacking a large ship of fourteen hundred tons. Besides, he did not believe in pirates; he had never seen any, and he guessed that those who had must have been afraid of their own shadows. And, then, there was nothing suspicious in sight—only those lazy, odd-looking junks.

Orders were given, and right heartily the men obeyed the call. For the next hour all was activity and bustle; some sails were hauled down, while others went up, and there was the usual singing among the men as they tightened the ropes. Then came clearing the decks. All chains and ropes must be neatly coiled on one side, all dirt swept away, and the decks left free for the officers' usual promenade and lookout.

The men betook themselves to the work they were engaged on when called to tack ship, and the old grey-haired officer trod the deck with his keen eye scanning the movements of the junks, which seemed to nearly follow our movements. What a lazy lot these Chinese are at sea! Our men had all occupation, polishing or painting, sorting and repairing ropes, etc.; but these Chinamen, we could easily see, were lying lazily on their backs on the deck, apparently without a care in the world.

Eight bells; another watch on deck. The light-hearted officer takes the lookout from the poop, with strict injunctions from his superior to keep his eye on those fellows, pointing to the junks.

Eight bells—our dinner-hour. I had earnestly pleaded

for a four-o'clock dinner to be established when I came on board, instead of the usual six or seven o'clock. The best part of the twenty-four hours is the evening. Then, even in the hottest weather, some kind of a breeze comes, and, be it ever so little, it is welcome ; and to be sitting in a hot cuddy, taking fiery soup and curry, and eating the countless highly spiced dishes of India, when the sun's fierce rays had departed and the real pleasant part of the day had arrived, was not to be thought of. So the evening was granted me for healthful exercise on deck, and our dinner was ordered for two hours earlier. It was certainly very hot that day as we adjourned to the saloon, and our mulligatawny and curry seemed hotter than ever. But long residence in India accustoms one to the diet, and dinner would be no dinner without them.

At last I can stand it no longer ; I cannot stay and take my coffee in this oven ; I must have air to breathe. So I make a move into my own sanctum, with its many port-holes letting in the cool evening. The two gentlemen betake themselves on deck as usual, but their cigars were destined not to be lit that night, nor for many nights to come.

The light-hearted officer meets his superiors at the companion, but he has an anxious look about him. He is always so cheerful, that the change is quickly noticed.

"I was just coming to you, sir," said he, addressing the captain. "Those fellows are certainly behaving oddly ; they cannot surely mean real mischief, yet each of their decks has quite a large crew, and they are mighty busy all of a sudden. There seems to be a good understanding, too, among them all, for what one boat does so does his neighbour."

My dear husband walks quickly along with him, followed by the chief officer, who quickly scans the whole flotilla of junks. They are indeed strangely close to us, but they have no other appearance than usual, except that there are more men about. Hundreds of these junks are to be seen at all times engaged in the mercantile service, and these must be the like. But the captain will not run any risk, and so gives directions for all hands to tack ship at once. Of course there

can be no real danger, that is quite out of the question. But, then, there is the island on one side of us and fourteen junks on the other—harmless-looking enough, but still, such things have been heard of before, and we must do without our breeze from the land to-night.

So "Tack ship!" rings out his clear voice, and every man is on deck in an instant, astonished at the sudden order, when we were almost within reach of the breeze which was rippling the water half a mile ahead. But the ropes are loosened, the sails flap, chains rattle. Then there comes a look of consternation. Can it be? Are we indeed almost within the very grasp of pirates? A moment more, and the words, "Pirates!—pirates!" rang from stem to stern.

I was on deck almost at a bound, with terrified eyes at the scene before me. The junks were now crowded with nearly naked men, frantic with joy at our entrapment. The first movement of ours to extricate ourselves from our perilous position and point our bows to seaward had been quickly frustrated. At a signal from their leader a red flag was shot up one of their masts, and like lightning every deck of these fourteen junks was manned by at least fifty men, coverings were removed, and revealed well-mounted guns, rifles, pistols, long knives, and instruments ready for torture and murder, while active hands plied their long "sweeps" in haste to intercept our unhappy ship before she could get enough way on her to carry us out to sea. Their object had evidently been to completely encircle us, and drive us before them to torture and to death.

In a few seconds, it seemed to me, they had formed themselves in shape like a horse-shoe, leaving one small opening undefended, which all their dexterous management of their ships had failed to fill. This was our only hope. If our good ship did not get her bows through before the deficiency was remedied, not one of our lives was worth an hour's purchase.

How they worked—captain, officers, men, boys, only forty all told, against seven hundred! The odds were fearful.

"It is perfectly useless," said the carpenter to me; "we may as well give in. Listen to the guns and rifles! What chance have we among those hundreds?"

No chance, *no chance*, I thought, but a merciful God above us! How I prayed that sunny evening! It seemed all I could do then, though I could find no words. My husband found me out presently, with agony in his ashy pale face, for he knew there was worse than death for me if he fell. He begs me to go below for his sake, out of danger for the present at least.

With what little strength is left me, I move slowly down. My feet seem like lead, I can scarcely draw them along. My hands have lost all feeling, I have no power even to clutch anything for support, and yet I feel I must do something to help. What if the pirates get on board! They are so close, hanging to the rudder chains, shooting at the helmsman, who, brave fellow! never leaves his post, though for the last half-hour he has been the target for their shots, the smoke nearly choking him. He first kneels down, and finally sits on the deck, with the wheel still in his hands. He never leaves go of his work for an instant, but he is as sensible as well as a clever fellow, and knows he can best serve us by preserving his own life while still keeping to his post. Even one man less may presently make all the difference to us, where there are so few.

Will our good ship never get way on her? It seems to take hours before her bows are really turned towards our only loophole, and these wretches are having it all their own way so far. As fast as our sails are set they are riddled. Ropes are giving way, and come rattling down on the heads of the unhappy crew. What is that fearful crash? Are we sinking? No, only one of the iron plates torn away by the enemy's guns.

There is no one able to ascertain the extent of this new disaster at present, but I feel I must see how things are going on, though I must not appear on deck, for it will but increase my dear one's agony. I go to one of the still open port-holes in my sanctum, and find myself almost face to face with a

pirate, who is struggling to reach the rudder-chain. Terrified, I hastily withdraw, and not one moment too soon, for another crash follows, and this time almost in my very face. I see the stern give way, shot, bullets, pieces of iron whirling past me, and clean through the bathroom door at the further side of the saloon, while at the same time the stern locker, couches, cushions, and lounges are in splinters and rags, and flung all over the floor.

The steward, a delicate-looking young man, comes to see if I am safe. The noise and destruction in the saloon are no greater than what is going on on deck, and the men are far too busy there, while the din and screams of delight from the pirates as each gun does its work are far too deafening for them to be unduly attracted by the latest crash, and so at present they are unconscious of this fresh danger below.

"I think the pirates intend setting fire to the ship as well as sinking us!" said the steward; "they are throwing burning cotton-wool on board! I cannot stay with you, madam, for I am throwing the burning balls overboard as fast as I can, and looking out for the first fellow who shows his nose above the ship's side. They would have been on board half an hour ago, only, thank God! we are iron, and our sides are smooth and slippery, and, being in ballast, are high out of water, and their hooks won't catch in the side; but so many plates being torn from us will make stepping-stones, as it were, for them. We have forced our way through the gap, God be praised! but they are after us like sleuth-hounds. I will send a boy to you, and if you could help him to pump water, and fill the buckets in case of an outburst of flame, and help load the rifles, we could get on a deal quicker, for all we want now is plenty of firearms, to pay them back a bit. A good puff of wind, and we could race the villains yet!"

He hastily departs, and I am again alone. Oh, for one look at my husband, to know that he is safe! I look towards the water, that lovely calm green sea. Must I indeed find a grave there before night? I am so young; I have had such a bright, happy life, and in full health. Must I now take that

life away to save myself from a worse fate? But there is work to be done now. We must use all the means in our power, and put our trust in God.

The fighting goes on on deck still the same, but with greater fury, for we have now time to handle our rifles, though they are only a few in comparison with those of our foes. But there is no reckless firing on our part; each shot is for a certain man, and does its work. We could not afford to waste powder on the air. We are not a gunboat, only a neat clipper ship, and our arms have seen little or no service.

Suddenly there seems to be a greater commotion on deck. I must see, danger or no danger. So I creep along, as much out of sight as possible. One of the largest junks is almost alongside, and her crew are full of the wildest excitement. What new horror are they hatching?—they are so busy running about their fresh occupation. They have ceased firing, but evidently they are not going to give up their nearly acquired victory, they are too frantic with joy for that. Many of them are whirling themselves round and round, shouting with the confidence of complete ultimate success. They have not been able to board us, nor sink us, nor set fire to us. We are not such easy prey as they thought. What, then, is this new excitement? Thank God! the damage to our plates is all above water-line so far, and though our sails are nearly though not quite useless, still now that our bows are pointed in the right direction, we might save ourselves if only a puff of wind would come, or, better still, a good stiff breeze. I fancy there is a little more wind. Our men have noticed it too; they are going from rope to rope, tightening and strengthening. The wind is surely coming at last!

But our foes show no sign of relinquishing their nearly won prey; on the contrary, they seem about to bring matters to a climax. Are all their well-made plans to be frustrated? all their powder and shot wasted? Fourteen boats to our one, seven hundred men to our forty, and still we float, and are unhurt bodily. True, we have had two large iron plates shattered and our rudder-post severely damaged. Every boat

on board is riddled with shot, and about as seaworthy as a wicker-basket, while our decks are charred with fire, and literally covered with bullets, old nails, pieces of iron, and the like. But all this does not make us theirs, and we are evidently moving a little—just a very little bit—in advance of them, only an oar's length at a time ; but every puff of wind seems to add another foot to the distance.

What are they going to do? All eyes are fixed on the junk alongside, where the greatest activity is displayed. Suddenly something is run up their mast as high as it will go. It looks very much in shape like a tea-chest with the lid off. Out of this appears a man, holding a large ball of something in his hand. He is going to throw it on our deck evidently, and draws himself backwards to take good aim, for he must not let it fall into the water. There is no fear of our escaping it if it reaches us ; it will explode and smother us. Not an explosion that will sink us and endanger them also, but a stifling, choking, suffocating explosion, sure and speedy death to us all.

The man stands with the deadly missile in his hand, quite still for one moment to fully take his aim. I hear my husband's voice, as the meaning of it all forces itself on him. "A rifle!—a rifle!" He snatches one from a sailor standing by. A steady arm, a good aim, a sharp crack, and the head in the "tea-chest" has disappeared, the uplifted arm is dropped, and the tea-chest is quickly lowered by the yelling disappointed pirates.

We expect another to appear ; but no, they are not brave enough to be run up to the mast-head, only to be shot down like a dog.

We have gained a hundred yards ! Is it to be a race for life ?

On we go, closely followed by our would-be captors. Our object is to strike out to sea. They, on the contrary, like to keep as close as possible to some of their well-known harbours of refuge. But there is still light enough for a few more efforts. It has not been bad management on their part.

One look at our poor dilapidated ship shows how wonderfully true their aim has been in most respects.

We leave our firearms and look to the sails, tightening some, loosening others, and making efforts to remove some of the rubbish with which our decks are strewn. Broken boats, splintered wood, snapped chains and cordage, shot, bullets, and nails lie in heaps, and render moving about most dangerous, especially as darkness creeps in.

We are still being pursued and fired at, but we do not now retaliate. We feel that our good ship is increasing her distance, and the darkness will also add to our hope of escape. They will have to give up pursuit before long, or they will be miles out of their beaten track, and should a calm follow at sunrise, it might be days before they saw their beloved Hainan again.

So they go on firing, and we go on sailing ; and I look, until at last I breathe more freely, and walk straight up to the group of men and officers, centred among whom I see my dear husband. He is gazing at our foes, who are now in the distance, though still pursuing. So I do not speak, but just slip my hand into his.

My touch causes him to turn, and he draws me to him. Bending his head, he kisses me, before men, boys, and officers, all, saying at the same time, so proudly, "At any rate I have found that my wife is no coward."

It is almost dark now, but I do not see any lamps being lighted, so I ask, "Can the wheel-man see to steer without a light?"

"We must all do without lights to-night," is the reply ; "we must not give them a single glimmer to show them our whereabouts. The night falling is our salvation, though the risk we run from collision with other vessels of course is great. *We* must *all* keep watch to-night, and by daybreak, please God ! we shall be thirty miles ahead of the pirates, if they choose to keep up their little game till then."

It takes such a long time to write this true story, and yet the hours of that night were alone a lifetime. I must sit on deck, too, if every one else must ; down in the saloon, alone,

and in darkness, is more than my overstrung nervous temperament could bear. Even though all sounds of pursuit have ceased, there is still this quick sailing, in utter darkness. In our damaged condition a collision would sink us in five minutes, or should the freshening wind cause the sea to rise, we should take in water with every "dip" we made. We know we have lost two entire plates at least, if not more: one from the stern; but where the other is we cannot find out until morning, for we dare take no lights below. The pumps have been tried, and we have ascertained that we are making no water, so the damage is above water-line at present. But if the sea rises it will soon rush in, and the anxiety of all is most profound. The darkness and wind which save us from the pirates, may still find us a grave before the sun rises.

With the early hours my husband sits with me for a short rest. He has been groping about with the men, trying to bring order out of chaos. It is most dangerous to move for fear of stumbling, or being tripped up in the dark by the *débris*. We can only talk of the one topic—the anxiety, the uncertainty, the longing for morning light.

This night of watching is too much for me. Shall I ever feel young again, I wonder? Did I ever laugh and sing? It seems so long ago if I ever did. I feel about eighty years old in less than twelve hours.

Our first act, when the sun rose, and the pirates were nowhere to be seen, was one of prayer and thanksgiving.

And now a long day's work lay before us. I follow nearly everywhere I possibly can, and words fail me to picture the ruin that had befallen us. But the great work of the morning was to find out where the second plate was torn from.

I am not allowed to follow below, so I wait with all the patience I can command. I hear many exclamations, much running about, and at last active steps taken. My husband appears once more with the officers. They are talking rapidly, and with much excitement. He is giving directions for some work to be begun at once. I do not worry him with questions. I will soon gather the news by listening and watching.

The damage is on the starboard side. We had been sailing all night on the port side. When we tacked ship the night before, our foes, to stop us, gave their guns full play, and succeeded in tearing away one or two plates, most fortunately for us all on the starboard side. Had it been the reverse, this narrative would never have been written, for we must all have gone to the bottom like a stone. Or had the wind changed in the night and compelled us to tack again, the result must have been the same. We should just have fallen over quietly to starboard and foundered.*

We carried an engineer, fortunately, and with help he managed to screw on a spare iron plate as well as he could. It was only a makeshift kind of affair, but it was tolerably water-tight, and we hoped would last until we got to Singapore. It took him all day to fix, and not an hour to spare, before night fell again.

I watched the other men as they removed the *débris* on deck. The captain's gig, now a few planks (many a pleasant sail I have had in her), and the lifeboat were in a similar condition. Thirteen buckets of shot were shovelled up by the boys.

Towards afternoon a steamer was sighted. We ran up signals of distress to arrest attention, and in half an hour she

* All this is very badly expressed, the writer not being well up in the subject. When she says the ship was "sailing on the port side," she means that she was on the *starboard* tack, with a heel to port. With regard to the damage, it is most improbable that whole plates would be torn away—indeed, this would certainly not be the case. The pirates' guns would fire round shot of no great size, and each one of these would make a tolerably clean round hole in an iron vessel. The plate struck would be doubled inwards to some extent, and the rivets round the edge would be started in consequence; but the damaged plate would remain in its place. Several shot taking effect would, however, cause a very serious leak if the ship heeled over so as to immerse the holes, and they had good cause for apprehension; but it would not be necessary to go below and search for the damage, which would be readily located by looking over from the deck. These are excusable mistakes for a lady writer, telling the story after the lapse of many years, to make, but it appears advisable to draw attention to them,—Ep.

was lying across our stern. She was bound for London, and all her crew and passengers gathered in groups, looking with astonishment at our shattered hull and sails.

The two captains converse eagerly: one is as anxious to learn as the other is to tell. Questions and answers are all to the point. "We wish to be reported"; "attacked by pirates"; "much damage done"; "no need of assistance at present." Should they stand by us for the night? No, it is not absolutely necessary.

I am invited to go on board the steamer, where there is a doctor and many lady passengers, who would kindly sit with me and comfort me after my terrible ordeal. They will be in Singapore in a few days, and will leave me in charge of our agent's wife, who will see to my safety and comfort until our ship arrives there.

But I will not hear of it; it would be no comfort to me to be placed in safety unless my husband could come. That, of course, is out of the question, so I prefer to stay where I am, and face whatever else is before us.

The "good-bye" is said, the salaam given, the flags are dipped, and I see them steam away, with just a little feeling of regret. We never met those kind faces again. Only half an hour's talk in mid-ocean, and yet how strangely drawn together—we by our trouble, they by their kind sympathy.

It may be a few weeks before we get to Singapore. All depends on how long this fair wind will last. We are at the end of May, and June generally ushers in the stormy season, both in this sea and in the Indian Ocean.

As the days pass by, I am more and more thankful that I remained here with my husband. He is not well, and the weather is fearful. June came in its very worst, blowing contrary and raining incessantly. Some days we scarcely make a mile in the direction we wish to go, though covering many miles over the ground in the twenty-four hours.

I see anxiety written on every face. So much more vigilance and watchfulness are required, for our repairs have proved by no means water-tight, and should the makeshift

patches be swept off in these heavy seas then the end will be very near for us all.

Days pass into weeks—nearly four weeks. We are nearing Singapore, after passing through the greatest storms and perils. To add to our trouble we have sickness on board. My husband is lying on a bed in the saloon with bronchitis and fever. Cold and exposure had brought on the first, anxiety the latter. I had a bed made up for him in the saloon to give him more air, for the heat is intense, and the fever high. At times he is quite delirious, and wanders, talking about the “light” to be seen entering Singapore, and sending for the officers every hour to point out to them where to look for it. His hands move vaguely over the chart, pointing to quite the wrong places. But they humour him, and he is satisfied for a time. In his snatches of sleep he talks all the time of lights, light-houses, channels, and pilots. His poor brain does not seem to have one moment’s rest. I realise now how deep his anxiety has been; all our lives and the safety of the ship depending largely upon his good management and judgment.

In a state-room close to us lies one of the boys, also ill with fever—low-river fever the doctors called it when they came on board at Singapore. It is not always of itself dangerous, but it so often turns to typhus of a malignant type. It did so in this poor lad’s case, and when we left Singapore for India we left him in his grave. Poor Robert!

Two of the men were ill in the fore-castle with the same fever, but of them I saw nothing. I had as much to do as I could manage to tend my husband and the boy, and the steward and the officers looked after them. They both recovered, I am glad to say.

It was midnight when at length we anchored at Singapore. Shore boats had been round us hours before, and by one of them we had sent for doctors and shore comforts, such as ice, milk, eggs, etc., for our poor invalids. They were all too ill to be moved, so our ship was turned into a hospital. Later

on we went up the country for change of air before we again started for Calcutta.

The day after our arrival at Singapore all the town turned out to look at and inspect us. Boatmen reaped a harvest, taking passengers round the *Fortuna*, while the "upper ten" who owned yachts spent days in taking their families and friends round us. Such an attack had never been heard of. The Government took the matter up; two gunboats were dispatched in search of the pirates, and two junks were captured. The scoundrels were handed over to their own mandarins, whose mode of justice is quicker than ours. They ask no questions, but cut off their heads at once.

The ships lying off the port, on their voyage to China, were all putting themselves in a state of defence before starting. All kinds of arms were bought up, were they never so old or rusty. Rifles and guns were cleaned and tried. In fact, our arrival caused quite a scare among the shipping. Of course we had been reported and looked out for, but no one expected to see such a wrecked-looking ship. The wonder was how we ever managed to weather the storms, and to get into port at all, in such a state.

THE ROMANCE OF THE "LOCH ARD"

A TERRIBLE coast is that which extends between Freshwater and the Needles. High Down has been cut back and back by the sea, until its beaten side has become a perpendicular wall of rock standing sheer up from the waves. Above is the edge of green herbage, below is the blue-green sea, and between is no stripe of grey, no band of mould, nor ribbon of sand. Here and there, however, a cave has been washed out of the cliff, and up these caves at low tide may be seen a patch or so of sandy floor, and in one or two places the caves have fallen in and a tiny bay has been formed, inaccessible except from the sea, and isolated at all times.

In Victoria, a few miles from Cape Otway, there is just such another coast—wilder, grander, and on a much larger scale, but like it as a full-sized ship is to her model. For miles it runs between Moonlight Head and Port Campbell, a long bight of grey cliffs, from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet high, edged at the top with ferns and heather, and broken at the bottom with a few diminutive bays, having each its shallow crescent of sand. One of these bays is somewhat larger than the rest, and boasts a few ti-tree bushes, sprung from seed dropped from the plateau overhead, and at one end the sea has worn out a couple of caves in the progress of its work, for the sea does its work by first of all grinding out the caves at its level, and enlarging the hole until the roof and sides fall in, to give a fresh face for it to undermine. It was in this bay, locally known as "The Caves," that there occurred one of the most disastrous and romantic wrecks in Victorian annals.

The *Loch Ard* was one of four iron clippers launched by Connell of Glasgow, all of which were lost at sea. Of her

sister ships, the *Asia* left Newcastle for Scotland and was never heard of again, and the same fate overtook the *Africa*, and also the *America* under her second name of the *Loch Laggan*. The *Loch Ard* left London on the 1st of March, 1878, with seventeen passengers and a crew of thirty. She was of 1,623 tons register, but as is customary with ships under our present tonnage laws, her burden was much greater and in this case was nearly doubled, for her cargo amounted to 3,275 tons. Let it not be supposed, however, that she was overloaded; the overplus simply means that her designer had made the best of the measuring formula, and produced a ship that would have her dues and tolls calculated on a favourable basis. The *Loch Ard*, then, left the Channel in March, and nothing more was heard of her till the 1st of June. At eleven o'clock on that Saturday morning a shepherd named Ford was out from Sherbrooke, mustering sheep on the plateau above "The Caves." As he was riding about and rounding in his flock he caught sight of a boy near the edge of the cliff. Riding up to him, he noticed that his clothes were all torn, and that his face and hands were covered with scars. It was Thomas Pearce, the midshipman of the *Loch Ard*, and he informed the shepherd that she had gone to pieces on the rocks below, and that all had perished except a girl and himself.

All had gone well with the fated ship until two days before, and then the clouds had prevented an observation being taken, and her course had been shaped to clear Cape Otway without her position being checked. Either owing to her compasses being affected or to some unusual current she headed too far to the north; at four o'clock on the Saturday morning the lookout sighted a reef half a mile from the ship. The *Loch Ard* was then before the wind under close-reefed topsails, advancing cautiously lest there should be danger in her path, for owing to the failure to get an observation, neither Captain Gibb nor the mate, McLachlan, had thought it wise to carry on too fast. As soon as the alarm was given the captain set more canvas and tried to wear, but the vessel would not come round.

Then the anchors were dropped and the sail taken in, and then, as the anchors dragged, more sail was set, and the vessel's head gradually brought up to the wind.

Before, however, she could be got out of the bay she drifted a good deal to leeward, and just as the day was breaking her starboard quarter struck on a sunken rock.

With the shock the topmast came down with a run and knocked two of the men overboard, and so great was the hole made in the hull that the sea came pouring in immediately, and before there was time to get the boats off the skids, where they had all been stowed instead of some of them being on the davits, the *Loch Ard* had gone to pieces.

The midshipman was hurled into the sea, and coming to the surface found himself underneath a boat that was floating keel upwards. Diving again, he got from under her, and then clung to her side. At first he drifted towards the beach, but finding the swamped boat beginning to be swept out to sea again, he left her and steadily swam to land. There he remained for a few minutes, safe, though somewhat cut about, and looked out over the bay, now all crowded with wreckage. Suddenly he heard a scream, and on a spar in the distance he caught sight of one of the passengers, a girl of about his own age—Eva Carmichael. Throwing off such clothes as would hamper him, he gallantly plunged into the waves and swam out to her rescue. It was a long swim, for the girl was drifting slowly away.

At last he reached her and caught her in his teeth, and finding a table floating by he seized it, and, abandoning the spar, brought the girl with its help safely to shore.

As she touched the land she fainted, and he carried her into one of the caves and left her on the sand while he returned and broke open a spirit keg that was being washed about amongst the rocks. The stimulant fairly restored her, and then he went out and with his knife cut some coarse grass for a bed, on which he left her to sleep while he went off in search of help.

At one end of the fragment of beach was the cave, at the

other was an unbroken wall of rock, against which the sand ended abruptly. To the right and to the left of him there was no way along the foot of the cliffs. He had been thrown on a shelf, as it were, and as the tide went down it simply bared the face of the cliff, which outside the bay ran deep into the waves. In the crescent was the patch of ti-tree bushes, and around these grew the grass. The margin of the sea was dotted with pieces of the ship and her cargo left by the retiring tide. Behind was the cliff-wall, one hundred and fifty feet high, offering at first sight not even a ledge for a bird to rest on.

As there was no help from the sea, or from the right or left, the only thing to do was to try and climb these formidable cliffs, and Pearce started up them. How he succeeded in clinging to the face of the rock is a mystery to this day. With his fingers and his toes feeling and finding the ledges and fissures invisible from the sea and from above and below, he made his way along and up, and backwards and forwards, and sometimes downwards again, in search of better handling and footing, and at last, grazed and scarred and bleeding, he reached the band of fern and heather and pulled himself in safety on to the top.

There he lay for a time to rest, and then he started to walk—whither? Around him was an open country, flat and unvaried, with not a sign of habitation or even of human life. Looking over the cliff he found that he could not see the beach below, and so he marked the spot and then set out towards the west.

After wandering for a couple of miles he found a track, and shortly afterwards he sighted the shepherd.

As soon as he told Ford his news, the shepherd hastened to his master at Sherbrooke for assistance. The beach, as we have said, was inaccessible from the sides, and so with the blankets and the wraps, Mr. Gibson brought the necessary ropes for descending the cliff. It was nearly dark when they returned to the spot marked by Pearce, and the descent took some time.

When they were on the beach again the midshipman led the way to where he had left Eva Carmichael asleep on her bed of cut grass. The cave was empty! In vain they searched for her along the sand and in the caves. On the sand were her footprints crossing and recrossing each other, so as at first to afford no clue.

Night had fallen, and by the aid of the lanterns they were endeavouring to make out from the footprints the direction she had taken, when they drew near to the ti-tree bushes. Suddenly one of them heard a sob and then a murmur of despair. "Oh! I am dying." Making their way into the bushes, they found her in almost a state of coma, and they were only just in time to save her from death.

She had heard the men cooeing on the beach, and, supposing them to be natives, had crept into the bushes out of sight.

In a few hours she had sufficiently recovered to be carried to the ropes, and after being carefully hauled up she was put into the buggy and taken to Sherbrooke, where under Mrs. Gibson's care she was soon herself again.

She and Pearce were the only survivors of the *Loch Ard*. She was a clergyman's daughter, and all her family had perished in the wreck. Pearce was the son of the Captain Pearce who was lost in the *Gothenburg*. His experience of the sea had not been a cheering one. Of the five captains he had served under, four had died, and this was his second wreck, he having previously been in the *Eliza Rawlins* disaster. His gallant conduct in swimming out to help the girl, after he had himself with so much difficulty got to land, created quite a glow of excitement in Australia. He received a gold watch and chain from the governor, he was presented with the first gold medal of the Victorian Humane Society, and when he got to Sydney the New South Wales people presented him with a sextant and a sum of money.

There has never been a wreck that made a greater impression, for in no wreck have the horrors been so overshadowed by the romance as in that of the *Loch Ard*.

A NIGHT ADVENTURE AT SEA

I HAPPENED to be in Valparaiso a few years ago, where I made the acquaintance of an American, one of the officers of the United States whaling-ship *Nantucket*, which had run in from her fishing-grounds in the Pacific to obtain a supply of fresh water and provisions; and one day, in talking over the different events of the cruise, which had lasted two years, he narrated the following curious incident which had befallen them.

One morning at daybreak, when lying becalmed, they found themselves in the midst of a shoal of sperm whales, and all four of their boats were speedily lowered and dispatched in chase. Two of them proved successful, and by the afternoon had returned to the ship, towing their captured prey; but the others were not so fortunate. Having by some blunder missed their first chance, it was not until after an arduous chase of many hours that the leading boat at last succeeded in overtaking and making fast to the whale.

A long and desperate struggle ensued, the second crew coming quickly to the assistance of the first; but line after line from both was expended by the animal, which proved to be of the largest size, and of immense strength and tenacity of life. It tried every means to escape; sometimes "sounding"—i.e. descending perpendicularly to a vast depth into the recesses of the ocean—until the enormous pressure of the superincumbent water was more than even its huge strength could bear, and it was forced to return to the surface, along which it would then rush with such velocity, dragging both

boats after it, that the water, divided by the sharp bows, curled high in a solid wall on either hand.*

At length, however, its speed began to slacken, and the whalers, anxious to secure their prize before darkness set in, advanced to finish him, and four more lances were rapidly hurled into the body of the monster, which, apparently exhausted by its preceding efforts, lay passive on the water. No sooner, however, had the last steel penetrated, than, as if the stimulus had roused anew all its vital energies, it hurled itself half out of the water, and, swinging its ponderous flukes high in the air, struck two tremendous blows in quick succession, one of which fell upon the foremost boat, cutting it completely in two, and scattering its occupants (one of whom had his thigh broken) in all directions.

After doing this mischief, it again sounded, and, hastily picking up their companions and placing the wounded man in the bottom of the boat, the rest, undaunted, impatiently awaited the coming up of the animal to breathe. But they waited in vain; their prey had escaped them. In his last desperate effort to free himself, he had (so, at least, I was told) dived so deeply that, with his strength exhausted, he was unable again to rise, and, dying below, sank still deeper.

The disappointed whalers sat in silence, watching their lines disappearing fathom after fathom, until the last yard was gone, when the bowman, who held his tomahawk uplifted ready to strike, was compelled to let it fall and sever the rope, lest the weight of the descending body should drag the boat down with it into the abyss.

Wearied with their long day of fruitless toil, and depressed by their ill-fortune, the men prepared to return to their ship,

* The writer is here indulging in a little "tall talk." The water thrown off by the bows of a whale-boat under such circumstances would certainly not curl high in a solid wall; a considerable concave wave would be thrown off, smooth in the hollow, and crested at a short distance as it spread out; the crew, except the two men tending the line, would sit well aft in the boat, to keep her bows up.—Ed.

which had long before sunk beneath the horizon ; for, in consequence of the calm, she could not follow them. After pulling for some hours, however, they felt a slight breeze spring up, which they knew would bring her down ; and after a while a rocket ascending showed her position, this signal being repeated every half-hour, until the vessel was within a few miles. They had been resting on their oars for some time, but had once more resumed them upon noticing that the breeze was dying away, and their ship likely to be again becalmed, when all at once a sound struck upon their ears, which made each man pause in astonishment. It was a groan, or rather a hoarse, heavy, smothered kind of moan, which seemed to be borne to them from across the waters ; but whether from near at hand or far away they could not tell.

The men stood up in their boat and listened. The night was cloudy and dark ; but the line between sea and sky was sufficiently distinct to show to their practised vision the form of their own vessel, which was now only three miles away ; but no sail was visible on that part of the horizon whence the sounds appeared to come. Thinking it possible, however, that some ship-wrecked boat's crew might be in their neighbourhood, they joined in a shout ; but there was no audible response. All at once, however, some flashes of light gleamed across the distant darkness, and a bluish glare shone out for a minute or two, flickered, and disappeared. At the same moment a distant piercing cry, followed by moaning similar to the first they had heard, rose on the night air. In all their experience, whether on sea or land, they had never heard sounds like these, and, amazed and startled, with all the superstitious fears excited to which sailors are prone, the men in the boat whispered their conjectures to each other.

"There's nothing as I know of that swims the sea or flies in the air could make those sounds," said one. "If there was any craft anywhere within miles, we could see her sails plain enough ; we are too far out for any coasters carrying cattle. Besides, there's no such trade on this coast, and we're eight hundred miles from it."

"If it's from a boat, what kind of a crew must she have? That's what I want to know," said a second. "I know what it is to be adrift and perishing. I was one time on a raft with twenty more for two-and-thirty days, and a whole lot of 'em went mad and died raging, from drinking salt water, and yelled and fought and throttled each other till they were pitched overboard; but then, these 'ere sounds ain't human like."

"Couldn't be a whale, Bill, that made that moaning noise?" asked another of the boat-steerer, who was a veteran salt, having followed his calling as a sealer and a whaler in all parts of the world.

"Well, it might be—that noise might; though 'twarn't exactly like it, neither. I've heard 'em too often not to know 'em. Sperm whale don't roar much; but Right black, or Greenland species, common all over the world, you can hear at times miles away. I remember once, when I was in New Zealand—we was a Bay-whaling near Hokianga—we killed a cow whale and her calf, and towed 'em into the bay. Well, the old bull, he come in from sea at night-fall, and kep' up such a moanin' and roarin' it was pitiful to hear him. He knowed his nissis had gone in there, you see, and he was a callin' on her to come out; and for nigh-hand on to a week he'd tack about in the offing until daylight, waitin' and callin' her. 'Twarn't till we stripped the blubber off her, and towed the carcass out to-sea, that he gave in and left."

For some time they listened, but nothing further was heard or seen. They rowed for some distance in the direction of the sounds and again shouted, but got no reply, and an hour afterwards they were picked up and taken on board. The captain, when he heard their story, swept the horizon with his night-glass; but, detecting no sail, he concluded that the vessel from which the light had proceeded (if they had really seen it) had passed out of sight in the interval; and as for the sounds which had startled them, he made light of them.

"You heard a grampus grunting, or some seals snorting, or

maybe some penguins trumpeting," he said.* "You were all knocked up and half asleep. Turn in, the whole lot of you, and have a snooze till daylight, for we must finish stripping and trying-out this fish. A set of lubbers you were, to lose that other whale!"

The men did as they were ordered, but were perfectly convinced that the sounds they had heard were not caused by any such agencies as their commander had mentioned. The light, strange as it was, certainly might have proceeded from a passing ship, although, in that case, it was odd that they could not see her. Each of the noises separately might also be thus accounted for, perhaps; but the whole occurring together, and proceeding from one quarter, was to them inexplicable.

The breeze freshened slightly before daybreak; but the ship, having picked up the boat, had been hove-to, and, consequently, had remained nearly stationary during the night, the carcase of the whale secured alongside by tackles, preparatory to stripping the blubber, or "blanket-piece," as it is called. Some of this had already been taken off, hoisted on deck, cut up, and placed in the coppers, used in the sperm-whale fishery for boiling (or "trying-out," as it is termed) the oil—these coppers being embedded in brickwork on the upper deck. The fires being laid ready for lighting, the mate was busy with his preparations when the captain turned out and came on deck.

"Do you know," he said, "that I really think there was no mistake in what the hands said. There's something out of the way going on, or afloat near us. My cabin window was open—the head of my bunk is close to it—and as I lay there I heard something, I can't make out what. Didn't you hear anything?"

"No, sir; we've been busy knocking about the decks. What was it like?"

"Well, at first it was like what the men said—deep groaning,

* The good skipper was rather wide of the mark here, for they were said to be eight hundred miles from land, and penguins cannot fly, having only "flappers" in place of wings; but perhaps he thought the whaler's crew did not know any better.—Ed.

moaning, and rumbling kind of noises, a good distance off, apparently. Then I heard a scream; then some one laughing—rum sort of a laugh it was, too. I should have thought myself dreaming, only for what the men had said.”

“How long since was this?” asked the mate.

“Within this last quarter of an hour. But is everything ready for trying-out, Mr. Smart?” and the captain examined the preparations made. “Call the watch, as soon as it is light enough, and set all hands to work. The coppers are charged, so you may as well light the fires, and then pass the word along for silence fore and aft. I want to listen, and try and make out what those noises mean.”

He went and stood by the taffrail, while the men on deck, ceasing their work, went to the side or mounted the rigging.

For a short time they remained thus, looking and listening, when the captain, hearing again the deep moaning he had described, raised his speaking-trumpet and hailed. As the hoarse sound died away, a startling reply was given. A burst of strange, harsh laughter came ringing across the water, gradually changing into a wild cry, which rose upon the night air, sounding inexpressibly sad and mournful. At that moment, as the seamen, thrilled and awe-struck, listened, the fires which had been lit beneath the coppers, and fed with pieces of refuse blubber, began to burn up brightly, the flames presently shooting up half-way to the tops, and casting a broad red glare over the sea.

As if this flame had been a spell to conjure up the demons of the deep, from the thick darkness beyond the verge of the circle of light issued a succession of most extraordinary sounds. Yells and howls, shrill screams and roars—now commingled, now separate, at times dying away, and again, as the flames shot up fiercely, rising in hideous chorus—assailed the ears of the astounded whalers, while at intervals, mingled with the roar, was what seemed to some on board like the sound, indistinctly heard, of human voices. This continued until the ship had passed some distance on her way, when the noises became more and more faint, and finally died away.

Before the fires were lit the ship had been put before the wind, in order that the smoke and flame might pass forward and not endanger the rigging or incommode the men at their work. Some of these, alarmed at the sounds, would willingly have had her continue her course and leave the vicinity; but the Yankee skipper was not so superstitious, and, being resolved to get at the bottom of the business, he ordered the fires to be put out and hauled to the wind. While the look-outs were trying to catch sight of any vessel or other object in the vicinity, the sounds again reached them, and, steering in that direction, the ship was hove-to and a boat lowered; but the crew hung back, and wished to wait for daylight.

"Why, what are you afraid of?" said the skipper. "Do you think there are evil spirits cruising?"

He paused in surprise, and all hands uttered a cry. A strange phenomenon was presented to their view: a pale blue phosphorescent light suddenly gleamed through the darkness, and showed them a wreck, dismantled and drifting. Through the open ports and breaches in the bulwarks the unearthly radiance shone, glimmering and flickering on the stump of the mainmast, the only fragment of a spar left standing. The vessel's bows were towards them, and from aloft they could sometimes see down upon her deck. Close to the after-hatchway burned a blue tremulous flame, sometimes shooting up vividly, then sinking until nearly extinguished, by the light of which all on deck was rendered visible.

All hands looked eagerly for signs of a crew, but nothing in the shape of a man was to be seen. The deck was cleared, the longboat and spars gone; there was nothing to conceal them from view, had any men been on deck.

But, although nothing in the guise of humankind was visible, other objects presented themselves to the view of the awe-struck sailors. Gaunt, weird, and hideously shaped animals were plainly seen flitting restlessly to and fro in the ghastly light of that unnatural illumination of a wreck at sea.

"I can tell you, sir," said my informant at this portion of his narrative, "that I for one was scared, and no mistake

about it. I was brought up in a part of New England where a belief in the supernatural prevails. I had heard that evil spirits appeared at times in the form of beasts, and haunted the places where they had when on earth committed their crimes, and we were off that coast where, for two hundred years, the desperadoes of every clime—pirates and buccaneers—had pursued their horrid calling.

“But daylight soon came, the blue light went out, and we then saw that the wreck was a real one, and that a boat was towing astern; and when we pulled towards her and hailed, voices from the after-cabin replied, so we pulled round and saw a man with his head and shoulders out of a port.

“‘I say, strangers!’ he shouted, ‘don’t none of you offer to come aboard. Some of the critters got loose last night, and they’re dangerous.’

“And dangerous enough they appeared to be, for at that moment came to the taffrail and looked down upon us several hyenas, whose eyes, sparkling with famine, glared most ferociously; and no wonder—they had had no food for nearly a week.

“The brig had, in fact, a complete menagerie aboard, which a speculative American was taking to California, visiting all the South American ports on his way. He had been blown out to sea by a hurricane, which at last carried away his masts, and he had been drifting about ever since, until his beasts were nearly starved. He had a miserable crew, half of them being his showmen, and he was his own captain, trusting to the mate to navigate for him. They had prepared the long-boat for leaving, should no vessel fall in with them, and had also made repeated abortive efforts to rig jury-masts. At their last attempt the spar had fallen, and the heel of it had smashed the cage containing the hyenas. All hands had to beat a hasty retreat to the after-cabin, and keep below until daylight should enable them to shoot or otherwise secure the brutes. Our fire, by exciting the animals, attracted their notice, and first they thought it was a burning ship. The light seen by the boat early in the night was made by burning

some spirits of wine out of the cabin window, and when they repeated the signal, hoping to attract our attention, they contrived to open the hatchway and push it out on the deck, where the beasts were prowling about, restless with the hunger which tormented them.

“The crew stayed three days with us ; we rigged them up jury-masts, and, what was of more consequence, supplied the captain with plenty of whale-beef for his animals, and thus saved him from ruin, for the poor man had invested all that he had in the menagerie. We heard afterwards that he got safely to Callao, and, I suppose, to California.”

THE WRECK OF THE "ARCHDUKE CHARLES"

THE *Archduke Charles*, transport, Captain Brown, left Quebec on the 29th of May, 1816, bound for Halifax, with the right wing of the Royal Nova Scotia Militia Regiment, under Colonel C. H. Darling. There were on board, in addition to the crew, eleven officers, over two hundred rank and file, and forty-eight women and children.

On the tenth day the vessel was clear of the St. Lawrence river, and her course had been set for Halifax, when about seven in the evening she was gradually encircled by the black ring, which showed she was within grasp of the fog bank. There were no means of escape, and so, as she was in the track of the homeward bound West India ships, she was put under easy sail, and precautions were taken against collision. Lookouts were stationed fore and aft, and the drummers were ordered on deck to keep their drums rolling as a caution to all who passed. As the darkness grew deeper, ten of the soldiers, under Captain Glennie, were told off to look out aft, and on the forecastle were stationed ten other soldiers in command of Lieutenant Charles Stewart, who was in charge of the Grenadier company.

The sea was running high, but wind there was little, and the vessel worked heavily on the heaving surge. The fog was at times so thick that it was impossible to see from one end of the deck to the other. Picture to yourself the sturdy transport, with everything taut and trim, with her tall spars running up out of sight, the canvas at times flapping heavily on the invisible yards, the watch on the lookout, the soldiers fore and aft also peering forth into the night, and at every rise and

plunge the sullen creak and scroop of the sorely tried timbers rising for a moment above the incessant roll of the drums.

Eight o'clock passed, and there was no change; the fog was as thick as ever, and the drums rolled on. Nine o'clock came, still there was no change. Just upon ten o'clock the fog lifted a little from the water, and then, dead ahead, Mr. Stewart saw a light. The curtain of fog dropped almost instantly and shut it out, as Stewart made his way aft to report to the pilot on the poop. To his astonishment he found the pilot drinking the colonel's health, and his reception was anything but cordial. "A light? Impossible!" laughed the pilot. "Go back to your duty, sir," growled the colonel; and to the fore-castle he went. He had not been there long before another lift of the fog gave another glimpse of the light. Again he returned aft to report, and again he was received with angry incredulity and ordered to go forward and remain there. At half-past eleven a dark object—probably a fishing-boat—shot across the bows of the ship, and over the roll of the drums was heard a shout, "Take care of the rocks!" Stewart stopped the drums to listen, but there was no sound of anything further, no sound of breakers; the fog had thickened again, and all was still. The drums resumed their monotonous roll, and Stewart for an instant went below.

Suddenly there was a terrific crash; the ship jerked and reeled and crashed again, and began to sink—bilged on the rocks.

The confusion on board was heart-rending. Of the captain nothing was seen or heard; the women and children ran about in the darkness as if distraught. The sailors rushed to the spirit-room: discipline was at an end, the officers lost all control of the troops, and the colonel disappeared up the rigging. His wife, whom he had left to shift for herself, found Stewart standing quietly on deck, and clinging to his knees begged him to save her. Nothing, however, could then be done, and, with the ship slowly settling down, her shrouds crowded with men as thick as bees, the hours passed until, about five in the morning, the light grew sufficient for those on board to make out their whereabouts. They had run dead on to the Jeddore

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Rocks, a mile and a half from the shore, near Green Island, forty-two miles east of Halifax.

Fifty yards away from them there was a rock standing above water, to which, if a line were led, they might make their way. Who would swim through the boiling surge? For the wind had risen, and the waves were beating furiously round the ship. On board was an "old Trafalgar man," brave as a lion. Would he not dare the journey? Alas! the "old Trafalgar man" was found hopelessly drunk, prostrate and unconscious. Who, then, would take the rope? The sailors hung back, and Stewart, urged by his men, volunteered.

Fastening a half-inch line round his waist, he dropped overboard from the forechains. He was sucked under the ship, and only with great effort, being a powerful swimmer, did he at last make way towards the rock. He reached it, but the seaweed kept him from landing, and when he pulled himself hand over hand on to the summit, he could find no crag or knob to which to fasten his rope. As he crawled across in search of footing or holding, the seaweed gave way, and he slipped into the sea. So rough were the waves on this the other side of the rock that it was half an hour before he could forge far enough through them to reach his old starting-place. And then, almost exhausted, he scrambled up, and crawling along the side found fixing for his rope. As he appeared on the top of the rock his comrades, who had been paying out the rope and had given him up for lost, caught sight of him. He motioned for them to send a tackle to him by the line; and then a boat load of women and children was started from the ship. From where Stewart crouched he could see another and larger rock, to which the road was fairly smooth, and thither the boat, following his signs, was taken. The tackle, however, came to his rock, and by means of it, in a sort of rough breeches-buoy arrangement, the men were brought off the ship.

One of the captains left his wife and child behind him. In vain the poor woman shrieked for her husband not to leave her. He was brought off by the tackle, to be greeted by

Stewart with, "Ah, my dear fellow, you'll never be turned to a pillar of salt for looking behind you!"

The women and children, the ship's captain, and the boat's crew were on the larger rock in comparative safety; the two hundred troops were on the smaller rock only a few feet above the waves. Stewart had fainted from exhaustion. A boat from the ship was worked along the line, and into this the colonel and some officers proposed to get, so that they might clear off. The men would not allow them to enter the boat, and there was a noisy mutiny. The officers were menaced, and it was only through Stewart coming back to consciousness and remonstrating with the men that the disturbance was quelled. The colonel and the officers and the pilot were allowed to go, and Stewart remained on the rock in command of two hundred and eight men.

Soon afterwards the ship went to pieces entirely, and the sea was crowded with her timbers and cargo. As Stewart and his men watched the wreckage floating past, it occurred to them that the tide was rising. The seaweed had been torn away from the top of the rock, so as to make room for the men. Amongst its masses were a few loose stones; two of these Stewart took and put at the water-level. In a few minutes they were covered by the waves. Again were two stones placed just above the water-level, again in a few minutes they were covered. The tide was rising! Another stone was placed above the water-level, but the waves never reached it—the tide had turned.

On the rock was no water, and the men had had no food for hours. Stewart saw a cask approaching, borne on the waves straight for the rock. Thinking it contained rum, and knowing the frightful consequences of its getting into the clutches of his men, he ordered a sergeant to stand by with a heavy stone to smash in its head as it came ashore. On came the cask, on the crest of a mighty wave. The sergeant threw, and missed; the cask was hurled right into the midst of the excited crowd, and, before a hand could be lifted to save it, was broken into and found to contain—water! The men

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drank freely and thankfully; all thought of mutiny was at an end, and thenceforward every order and suggestion met with prompt and cheerful attention.

But the men were tired out, and the day was closing in. The rain came down in torrents, and a cold north-easter blew. To get the needed rest, the seaweed was further cleared away, and the men lay side by side on the bare rock, with others lying on them so as to keep them warm; others, again, lay on them. And thus did many sleep, gaining warmth from each other—many, but not all. Just before nightfall a speaking-trumpet came floating past, and was secured by one of the sergeants. A few minutes afterwards another sergeant saw something shining in a crevice, and picked it out. It was a find of ill omen—a button of the 69th Regiment! Twenty years before there had been a terrible wreck on these very rocks, and here was the only trace that had ever been found of them! The sergeant knew the story. He picked out the button in silence, and passed it stealthily to Stewart, who said not a word, and hid it in his pocket. And then night closed in, and the fog settled down again, and on the rock lay the pyramid of sleeping men, with only two of them awake and watching—one of them the sergeant who had found the button, the other the grenadier lieutenant who had refused to abandon his command.

Meanwhile the sailors and officers had got safely away from the other island to the shore, and leisurely proceeded in search of help. After some time they bargained with a few of the fishing craft they found at Jeddore to go out to the rescue. The women and children were all taken off their island, and then the rescuers started to find Stewart and his men.

About eleven o'clock a light was seen from the rock looking red through the fog. The light approached dangerously near, and Stewart, taking the speaking trumpet, shouted forth a warning. A small boat was launched, and in reply to Stewart's inquiry through the trumpet how many they could take, there came back the shout, "Eleven." Stewart roused his men, and formed them up in military order. Then he numbered them

off from the left, and every eleven he separated. When the boat emerged from the darkness and rowed to the rock, the first eleven stepped into her, and away they were taken to the schooner whose light shone through the gloom. Again and again the boat worked backwards and forwards, nineteen times in all, and at every journey eleven men were taken into safety; the last man to leave the rock, the eleventh of the last eleven, was the lieutenant. And thus, with the exception of ten who were lost when the ship was left, all who had started from Quebec were saved; for all were taken to Halifax without delay.

And how were the chief actors in this stirring drama dealt with! The colonel who left his wife to perish and vanished up the rigging, and who deserted his men to take refuge with the women, was promoted, became Major General Darling, etc., etc., Governor of Tobago, etc., etc. He had "influence." Lieutenant Stewart was threatened with a court-martial for having left the wreck without orders from his commanding officer, who had disappeared up the mizen-shrouds into the fog; he had to make good his company's pay, which went down with the treasure-chests in the *Archduke Charles*; and, although recommended for his step by the Governor-General of Canada, for distinguished service on the lakes, was passed over again and again, and fourteen years after the wreck was graciously promoted to be "Captain unattached," in which rank he died. He had "no influence." His name, nevertheless, will live.

MY FIRST COMMAND

BY HAROLD BINDLOSS

THE vessel to which this story relates was neither a slave-hunting gunboat nor a dashing frigate, but a smart cutter-yacht which had won prizes at local regattas until better boats were built to beat her, and Wilson's elder brother bought her a bargain. Still, on the first memorable occasion upon which we navigated her, the *Ruby's* youthful crew had their fill of excitement before, as much by good luck as management, they came ashore.

I was about seventeen at the time, and, aided by Wilson, who was younger, had constructed several death-traps out of orange-boxes, barrel hoops, and canvas, in which we went sailing until our parents, fearing for our lives, assisted us in the purchase of a centre-board dinghy. This happened after Wilson boldly put to sea in our home-made vessel, and was discovered homeward bound by his brother, who cruised in search of him, pushing the water-logged craft before him while he waded waist-deep along the bottom. Leyland studied navigation at a boys' nautical college. Why Wilson senior shipped us as a crew for a voyage down the Welsh coast, or our guardians permitted it, I cannot remember. Perhaps he could not get anybody else, and my own had not seen the *Ruby*.

In any case, one cold night before the Whitsuntide holidays we stood exultant in the *Ruby's* cockpit. She lay straining at her cable with a rush of sand-filled water sluicing seawards past her in a broad tide channel, which winds among the shoals of Liverpool Bay. Two miles away, and across a great

bank of sloppy sand which stretched out into the Irish Sea, the lights of a fishing-town blinked through the haze which the east wind drifted along the Cheshire shore. Seaward, the sky was clearer, and the thin crescent of a new moon hung above the tumbling waters. There was a moderate sea running outside, and a strong nipping breeze. A boat from a schooner, anchored near, lay alongside, and as he dropped into it the *Ruby's* owner said to me, "I'll be back again with the oil and other things in an hour or two, and we won't start until to-morrow. If the breeze freshens, give her a little more cable; you can't well come to grief here, or I wouldn't leave you."

Wilson senior, being over thirty, had evidently forgotten the capacity of some youngsters for coming to grief anywhere; but we felt proud of ourselves as we watched the boat plunge away, leaving us in charge of a real, sea-going, racing cutter. We sat in the cockpit and shivered for a time, watching the tall topmast raking across the stars, and listening to the roar of the surf on leagues of hammered shoals. It sounded very like processions of locomotives crossing a distant bridge. Then we began to feel lonely, for the wind moaned eerily across the great empty sands, and set the halliards drumming against the mast, while we remembered that we lay two miles from the mainland, with no chance of reaching it until the flood-tide made. The *Ruby* was a deep, narrow craft of eight tons yacht measurement, with heavy spars, and decked all over save for an open well, perhaps six feet long, to stand in.

"If she broke her chain, or anything, this wind and tide would drive her out to sea, in spite of us," Leyland said dubiously, when an hour had passed; "it's freshening, too."

"What's she going to break her chain for!" asked Wilson sarcastically. "Of course, there might be tidal waves and tornadoes, but if I wore rows of brass buttons and got scared at nothing, I'd stay at home and help the nurse."

There was a splash alongside as the speaker ducked, and the *Ruby's* mop disappeared astern, while, knowing that we could not afford such expensive amusements, I threatened to use the iron tiller in case of hostilities. We were all of us a little

worried and very cold, for the boat was a long time coming, and we went bare-foot, partly because Leyland said the navy bluejackets always did so, while Wilson senior objected to what he called shod hoofs scratching his varnish. Also, the wind was freshening, and the *Ruby* rolled, swaying her tall mast to and fro, and dipping her bowsprit into dashing seas.

"You had better pay out a few fathoms of cable, and don't make a mess of it," I said, in a tone of authority.

The pair crawled forward along the slippery slanted deck, and I heard them fumbling round the bitts, which are square timbers the anchor chain is fastened to. Then the chain began to run "Clink-clink" through the pipe from below, and the boat ceased plunging as she drifted astern, until Leyland's voice rose up :

"Get a turn. You want to check her neatly while I clap on the chain-stopper."

"Chain stopper your uncle !" said Wilson, "you read that in a book. This isn't a full-blown square-rig merchant ship."

Just then the yacht rolled viciously, and they apparently fell over each other, while I jumped to my feet at the sound of another splash, and Leyland cried again, "You've kicked one of my new boots in, cook you ! Get into the punt and catch it, skipper."

I had, however, sense enough to decline to chase anybody's new boot in a tiny dinghy late at night in a jump of a sea, and what they did next I never exactly knew, though each of them afterwards demonstrated that it was the other's fault, but I ran forward as for my life when a whirring rattle commenced. The fresh breeze and tide together were sweeping the yacht away, and the heavy chain was running out fathom by fathom. A cable lies in coils in the boat's bottom, and, the end being seldom reached is not always, as it should be, carefully made fast. As I flung myself down on the narrow wet deck forward, Leyland, shouting vigorously, was being dragged over the bows by the chain, and it was only when I grasped his legs that he let go. He declared afterwards that he felt broken in two. More fathoms rattled out, and after nearly losing a finger

trying to get slack enough to throw a loop or bight round the bits, I shouted, "Jump below, Wilson, and twist a turn round the mast. Sit on it, Leyland, while I jamb it with my foot."

The only result, however, was a score across my sole and a piece ripped out of Leyland's pantaloons, while next moment there was a cry from Wilson, "Too late!—it's all gone!" and, striking me hard in passing, the last link splashed into the sea, leaving us adrift without an anchor. The *Ruby* swung round, and commenced to blow away towards Ireland, and we looked at each other aghast until, when Wilson came up, Leyland said sullenly, "This idiot is responsible, he kicked my new shoe in."

"Hung his boots to ventilate upon the bits," commenced the other scornfully; but I broke in:

"You can settle all that afterwards. Get below and find the hemp rope and the kedge."

They disappeared, and I ripped clear the tyers which held the mainsail to its gaff and boom, and endeavoured to hoist it. The sail was a big racing one, the spars heavy, almost beyond the strength of a shivering lad clinging with his bare feet to a slippery, slanting deck to do anything with; but by degrees I got the throat end of the long gaff up, and a balloon-like mass of canvas thrashed and thundered, its lower folds throwing up bucketsful of very cold salt water.

There was no doubt that the others meanwhile worked hard to find the kedge (a small anchor used to assist the main one), for I afterwards discovered the ruin they wrought in their efforts; but when they came up with it, we had drifted out into open water, where two kedges would not have held us, and I shouted, "It's no use now! Take the helm, Wilson, and keep her before the wind. Leyland, get hold of the topping lift, and pull the boom well up."

Twenty minutes passed before we got the heavy boom topped clear of the seas and the canvas partly set. We should have reefed it, but that was too much for us in a rolling boat, and, lying down until white foam sluiced boiling along one depressed rail, the *Ruby* sped out into the night,

while the lights of the fishing-town faded astern. Then we all felt helpless, and even more lonely.

"Wind's dead off shore," said Wilson, struggling with the tiller. "She would never beat back against the tide, even if we could reef and set the mainsail, or find the channel—which we couldn't. We can only run down wind, and try to fetch Beaumaris. No other place to get into with this breeze, eh, skipper?"

"Correct," I said ruefully, "and Beaumaris is over forty miles away. I'll run the jib up and light the binnacle."

Setting the *Ruby's* jib was a different matter from handling the pocket-handkerchief we used on board the dinghy; but it was done with the help of Leyland, who several times nearly dived into the swath of foam the keen bows swung giddily out of. But a sense of exhilaration commenced to thrill us when we saw the black curve of canvas race splashing through the froth, and then heave up streaming into the air again. A tolerable sea was running, but now we knew the worst we felt slightly comforted. We crawled below to light the little binnacle, or compass, lamp, and the *Ruby's* four-foot-high saloon was a picture. The paraffin stove reposed in one corner upon its head, and sooty grease was trickling over everything. Our provisions rolled to and fro among it and bilge-water, as did Wilson senior's portmanteau, while the rest of the floor was strewn with ropes, blocks, rowlocks, a rusty kettle, and sundries dragged forth from the lockers.

"The other idiot did it in his flurry. There'll be trouble when Wilson sees the mess we've made," said Leyland.

It was easy to lay the binnacle down beside the helmsman, and give him a course from the coaster's almanack for Wales, but it needs training to steer correctly even by a big ship's compass, and our tiny one whirled round on its axis at every heave. So I explained to the helmsman vaguely, "Don't let her go south of west, and we can't well miss the Carnarvonshire mountains when daylight comes. They're—how high is Snowdon, Leyland?"

"Don't know—didn't come here to do geography," answered

the nautical student ; "but the books say it's perilous to jibe a small fore-and-after when running hard by your lee. We are running by our lee, aren't we ?" *

We were, with the great black mainsail swinging above us, like a half-inflated balloon, and ugly curling seas chasing us astern, while the brine shot up in cascades each time the bows went down. But, and because the man or boy who can handle a small open boat under canvas can, with a brief experience, handle any craft so far as his strength will serve, Wilson could steer. He knew, and we knew, that if he blundered when the yacht rose dripping on a white comber's crest, the heavy boom would swing smashing over, and probably leave us without a mast. But he had learned the trick of the tiller sailing tiny dinghies, which is a thorough, if somewhat dangerous, school. So we drove down on the coast of Wales, passing unpleasantly close to a coasting steamer, whose tall, black side loomed above us like a wall as she rolled another fathom of it clear. Bright lights streamed out from a tier of blinking ports, and she looked big and safe and solid, shearing resistlessly through

* "Running by the lee" means that a vessel has the wind very nearly dead astern, with the mainsail (in a boat such as is here described) eased out on the weather side. For instance, suppose the wind is a little on the port quarter, the main boom should by rights be eased right out on the starboard side ; but it is quite possible for the sail to be full, and pulling well, with the boom out to the fullest extent on the *port* side. This is an expedient sometimes adopted in racing, or under other circumstances, when about to round a buoy or mark boat, to save the trouble of hauling it over twice ; but it should never be done for a long run, especially in a strong breeze, with any sea on, as there is then considerable danger of the boat yawing so as to bring the sail *by the lee*—that is, with the wind on the wrong side, in which case the boom would come swinging over with great violence to the full extent on the other side, and might possibly take the mast out of her. To "jibe"—as this is termed—in safety, the sheet is hauled in, carefully steering the boat so as to keep the wind on the right side of the sail, and when there is not much sheet out, bring the wind on the other quarter, and ease away the sheet directly it swings over, which it will do quietly and easily. These boys were, of course, unable to do this under the circumstances, and so they had to make the best of it, steering very carefully.—ED.

the seas, while, lurching half-hidden between them, we envied the people on board her.

"It was Leyland's foolery that brought us here. What does he go hanging his wretched boots upon the bitts for? Still, there's no use growling now," said Wilson, leaning on the tiller. "Don't you think some hot coffee would come in handy?"

We all thought so, and Leyland held the stove fast, which was not easy, while I bailed up some of the sooty oil from a corner with a tablespoon, and after several miniature explosions at last produced a canful of grimy fluid, which we passed first to the helmsman as coffee. We were thankful to get out of the saloon.

"I've tasted as nice black-draught, but it's warming," he said. "Won't you take the tiller? I can see six compasses jumping, and my right arm's coming off."

"Yes," I said. "You and Leyland had better get the dinghy in, or try to fasten a bucket astern of her."

Clinging with both hands to the long tiller, while the foam splashed up about me, or boiled past below, I watched their struggles. A dinghy towed by a yacht running hard before the wind generally charges up on the larger vessel apparently in an attempt to jump on board her; but our half-swamped boat was too heavy for them to lift out, and, as she reeled up and down the sea-slopes, the risk of jumping into her was heavy. So Wilson said, "She'll just have to play her own way, and with good luck mayn't knock too many large lumps off our counter. I think I'll lie down a bit."

It was cold and wet and splashy out on deck, but presently both came back, Leyland explaining that he liked fresh air, while Wilson made strange noises as he put his head over the rail. Even the inexperienced amateur sailor seldom suffers from sea-sickness while kept busy on deck, but it is trying to any one to lie still in a stuffy hole in a wildly lurching craft. At intervals, as happens with the east wind, heavier gusts drove bitter spindrift rattling about us and whitened the sea, pressing the yacht down until the ridges of water that raced

up astern stood high on either side of the narrow rushing hull. Some came on board, seething deep into the cockpit, and drenching us thoroughly, while my crew pumped hard; but there were lulls again, during which, though trusting the vessel, I grew more uneasy. It would be awkward if we drove down on the reefs of Anglesey before daylight broke, for, under her half-set canvas, the yacht would only run before the wind.

But at last, when we were all wet and chilled to the backbone, about the time when a strong man's vitality sinks to its lowest, the breeze commenced to fall, and, calling Wilson to the helm, I crawled into the saloon, too tired to grow seasick before I fell asleep. A thump on the deck awakened me, and, turning out with a splitting headache, I saw dim green water heaving under the growing light, with hillsides rising above it out of haze ahead. One lower than the others I recognised as the hog-backed Island of Puffin, which guards the entrance to the Menai Strait, and we had made a good shot for Beaumaris, which lies a few miles up the channel. There was little wind, but the boom of the long heave piling itself upon battered stone rang ominously out of the haze.

"The flood-tide will be running now, and whisk us through the sound," I said; "help me to set the mainsail."

Wilson roused Leyland, who lay huddled, a moist and somewhat pitiful object, in the cockpit, with his head on a rusty chain, and, for it was daylight, we soon set the whole sail. Then, swinging drowsily to the cradle-like lift of swell, the yacht crawled on towards the island, until we could see the white spray leap up from its ledges, on which the ground sea broke heavily.

"There wouldn't be much of her left if she went ashore. Hardly any wind to help us, and the tide's going in like a mill-race," said Wilson uneasily.

Steep crags now rose on either side, the swell rumbling about them, and tumbling nastily as the tide drove it through the narrow channel between. Perhaps most readers know that as the tides swing to and fro along our coasts they do not only rise and fall upon the beaches, but, round headlands, in

sounds, channels, and river mouths, form swift streams which run occasionally eight miles an hour. The flood was then pouring inland, bearing us with it even faster than we liked. The rocks shut the wind off, the tall, white canvas flapped, and the boat slid now sideways, now stern-foremost, while we said little as we watched each upward rush of foam and the backwash streaming down the stone, until Wilson growled, "If she hit any of those ledges, swimming wouldn't be much good."

I did not answer as I gazed at a big stone beacon, which, standing out in the channel, seemed forging towards us in a wreath of foam. If we could pass on its western side, there was deep water into the sheltered strait, but between it and the island the tide boiled furiously over a reef. It drew rapidly nearer, the sails flapped idly, and I said, "Jump into the dinghy, take a line from the bowsprit, and row your hardest. She'll either roll over or smash her bottom in if she strikes yonder."

With a great show of hurry they dropped into the punt and made the line fast, but it is difficult for the inexperienced to tow a larger vessel with a boat. So the line, slipping over the dinghy's stern, ripped forward until it hurled Wilson backwards upon Leyland, and nearly capsized her, while, at the next stroke they made, the tightening rope jerked the tiny craft back right under the bowsprit, and Leyland's cap fell overboard. They pulled perhaps a minute before a turn of the hemp caught Wilson's oar, nearly dragging it away from him, while, before he could disentangle it, the yacht forged up on top of them, and they were caught under the wire ropes which stay the bowsprit. And all the while the beacon drew nearer, and horribly nearer, and it was evident that we were going the wrong side of it.

"It will be all up in a few minutes if you can't do better," I shouted, bending over a great sculling oar in the stern rowlock; and, shooting the dinghy clear, the rowers providentially managed to keep ahead with the line. They made an interesting picture, and I can see them yet, swinging

backwards on the oars, with the perspiration streaming down their set faces, and Wilson's lips drawn back from his clenched teeth. Behind them troubled water sank and heaved, while the roar of the tide on the reef almost drowned the rattle of the stout ash-wood in the rowlocks. They were pulling for their lives, which perhaps gave them strength beyond their years.

My own eyes felt as though they were coming out of my head, my mouth seemed dried up, and my throat stuck together, for it needed a grown man to handle that heavy oar when perched on a long duck's-tailed counter that tilted and heaved. But we were making a little, for the pillar hung tall and threatening over our beam, as though, when the crash came, it would drive right through the *Ruby's* middle, and I remember trying to shout, and only making a cackling in my throat. The others understood it, and were doing their best, guessing what would happen if that was not sufficient. Could they keep a strain on the rope another half-minute, we might pass clear; otherwise, yacht and crew would be ground up together on the surf-licked stone.

They did it gallantly; the pillar towered just level with the *Ruby's* stern, and, not caring to glance at it, I bent double over the oar until there was a breathless howl from Leyland, and, looking up, I saw the danger drive away astern. We were swept clear by the flood-tide into Menai Strait. Then I sat down on the counter and nearly choked, while in the dinghy, which the line jerked backwards towards the yacht, Wilson thumped the spluttering Leyland hard upon the back, until, when they were alongside, he stooped and thrust his head into the water. After this he poured a capful down the back of his companion's neck.

"I've cricked my spine, split off all my buttons, and rubbed a hole in my hands; but we've cheated the reef," he gasped. "Leyland's so proud of himself that I've had to cure him of a swollen head."

Ten minutes earlier the skipper, at least, had felt abject, much like a criminal awaiting execution; now we felt like

admirals, and, determining to enter Beaumaris in style, set the staysail and lofty topsail. Warm sunlight crept across the woods and hills of Anglesey, a smooth swell splashed lazily along the sheltered beaches; and any one can sail a yacht with a gentle, fair wind. It is when she plunges under shortened canvas into big, breaking combers that seamanship comes in, and in our case we had only to keep the boat running during the night, without jibing her, down wind, which at times, however, was difficult enough.

We drifted round the end of Beaumaris pier, picked up somebody's mooring buoy, and made fast to its chain, for Wilson said, "I don't think any one would have the heart to turn us off without an anchor, and we wouldn't go if they did."

As we thankfully furled the canvas, a longshoreman pulled past in his punt, and, looking at us, asked, "You wass come from Liverpool in last night's breeze; who wass bring you?"

"We brought ourselves," said Leyland proudly; and the Welshman commented, "Deah, deah! you wass get drowned certain some day," as he paddled away.

"I think I could eat something," said Leyland presently; and Wilson repeated, "He thinks he could! It's perfectly sure I am, and if there's anything good in Beaumaris, I'm going to get it. Jack took the oil-tin, so heave me up the small water-jar, and I'll bring some stove paraffin."

"You had better send him a telegram first thing," I said.

Wilson evidently did so, for after we had spent the day in cooking and endeavouring to render the *Ruby* comparatively clean, and had been turned off three different sets of moorings by indignant owners, his elder brother came down by the passenger steamer. Surveying his vessel disgustedly, he said, "A pretty mess you have made of her; and it's a special mercy you didn't drown yourselves. A good anchor and cable, besides the new mop, gone; three locker lids broken; paraffin in the water-jar, and grease all over—well, I suppose you're not particular."

"You needn't look at it in that way," said Wilson junior

stiffly. "You might be thankful we saved your boat and are here at all. If it hadn't been for the way we handled her, we wouldn't be. Instead of growling about trifles, a decent fellow would say we deserved some credit."

"You'll get all you deserve," answered the elder brother with a twinkle in his eye—"especially when your father lays hands on you. Your mother, who might have known better, sat up all night mourning for you. I suppose five pounds worth of anchor and cable is a trifle to millionaires like you, and as to the credit, one would fancy that Providence, which protects the foolhardy, deserved a share of it too."

Two of us have sailed other waters and much larger ships since then, but we have none of us forgotten the wild night-run on board the *Ruby*, when, against my wishes, I first took command.

MUTINY!

BY FRANK H. SHAW

IN these days of high-speed liners and degenerate monotony, the men that go down to the sea find very little romance to enliven their day's routine; but once in a way there comes a *souppçon* of dash and daring which proves to the casual observer that old ocean is still fraught with romance and adventure. Such an episode occurred a few years ago, and, if only as an example of genuine British pluck in time of need, it is worthy to be handed down for the benefit of the boys of to-day. The good ship *C*—— of *B*—— lifted her anchor at the Tail of the Bank one fresh spring morning a dozen years ago, and commenced her outward journey to San Francisco with as promising a "send-off" as the heart of mariner—master or otherwise—could desire. Trim as a man-of-war, alow and aloft, she presented a picture pleasing beyond measure to the eye of the most critical old salt that passed an enforced idleness on the banks of the Clyde. And as her head canted northward to the filling of her head-sails, yard after yard becoming clothed with bellying canvas, many a blithe chorus rose from her deck as the sails were sheeted home, until, with a freshening S.W. breeze, she lay away on the first tack towards her destination. Her captain—a young man newly appointed to this, his first command—cast a glance of pleasure at the towering steeples of white above his head, squinted into the binnacle, and gave the man at the wheel his orders, "Full and by."

"Full and by, sir," was chanted back from the leathery visage with slow moving jaws, and with a gentle lift in the

royals, and all the other sails drawing full and straining in their new freedom, the gallant ship cast a glinting spray of white, splashed with rainbow hues, from the bows.

"Her forefoot's talking Spanish already, Mr. McPherson," said Captain J—— to his first officer—who had just come aft in answer to his call; but the grey-headed sea-dog shook his head with all an old salt's pessimism, and pointed to a low-lying bank of clouds away on the weather bow. "There'll be some wind in that, I'm doubting, sir," he said; but the skipper, bright and elated at his auspicious start, merely gave a short laugh of complete satisfaction, and suggested that the crew should be mustered. "All hands lay aft there!" sang out the mate in a husky voice. Obedient to the call, the nondescript crowd of men comprising the ship's company clustered at the break of the poop, and answered in various degrees of broken English as the third mate called the roll. A villainous lot they looked—recruited as they were from the lowest crimps' boarding-houses on the Broomielaw, and shipped in the last stage of drunkenness. Stalwart Scandinavians for the most part—your Norseman is still as much a rover as ever were the old Vikings, though lacking their courage—but here and there showed a sprinkling of swarthy Spaniards and "Dagos" generally. "Certainly less easy to manage than a lady's school," ruminated Captain J——, but then his eye fell on the seven apprentices clustered together, and his visage brightened at the sight of the sturdy lads with their honest British faces, and when the muster was complete, he ordered his steward to "splice the mainbrace" with a distinct feeling of content in his heart. The fresh breeze held and denied the mate's prognostications, and in a few hours the north of Ireland loomed high to port. The capital start was improved. With a following wind the *C*—— skirted the danger-strewn Irish coast, and ran south-west with all sail set. The days flew by, and with the exception of the usual growls and visits aft, the motley crew gave no grounds for complaint. But there was a seething spirit of dissatisfaction abroad, and many low mutterings were heard in the forecastle—the "grub"

was blasphemed, the characters of the officers, one and all, were held up to criticism, and the smouldering spark of discontent needed little to make it break forth into an open fire.

Little Rob McLean had no business "forrard," but, being a first voyager and new to the severe line of restraint which separates "forrard" from "aft," he often used to curl himself up in the "apron" above the cutwater to watch the play of the sparkling waters and the gambols of the dolphins as they leapt and swam a merry race with this invader of their ancestral home. To-night he had taken up his usual position and, secure from observation and interruption, had fallen into a reverie. The snug, creeper-covered cottage esconced on the bank of the Perthshire lock was fast growing more distinct before his mental eye, the soothing swish-swish of the rippling waves and the light cool breeze of the Southern tropics lulled his senses—see, there was his mother holding out her welcoming arms to her sailor-lad, his father was striding down the path; but this voice which came to his sleepy ears was not his father's, surely his homely Doric never took on this guttural note—hark ! what was this ?

"Vell, I tells you, Gaspardo, to-night vas our jance. Loog zar, the segund mate is sleeping, und so vas all der rest."

Robbie pricked up his ears; this was of more importance than pretty cottages, and as the conversation grew closer and more confidential, he listened to a blood-curdling plot.

Peering furtively over the boom guys, he saw in the fading moonlight that the two men were a big, blustering Dutchman named Jansen and a shifty-eyed Portuguese—the two men who had always been in the forefront of the "growlers." The poor little lad dropped quaking to his retreat as the two scoundrels, having perfected their plans, rose to leave the fore-castle-head.

As soon as McLean could summon up enough courage for action, he stole from his unwilling hiding-place and sped aft. Then the need for caution reasserted itself. The second officer had succumbed to the drowsy influence of the night, and lay over the oaken rail which crowned the break of the

poop, his senses wrapped in sleep. Creeping up the companion as though to look at the time, McLean cast a furtive glance at the dreaming helmsman, and then quietly walked over to Mr. Scott's side and woke him with his news.

The half-dazed officer could hardly grasp the tenor of the lad's remarks, and, realising his own neglect of duty, was about to dismiss him from the poop, when sounds of hammering and breakage came from the fore-deck. Here, at any rate, was confirmation of the first part of the lad's story. The men were broaching cargo, and the officer remembered that all the spirits in the vessel's cargo were down the fore-hold.

"Call out all the apprentices, boy," he said, realising that in this time of stress he must rely on the British hearts amongst the crew.

Like a flash Rob sprang to obey, and in a trice the six sleepy lads were rubbing their eyes and looking round for "a job on the braces."

Meanwhile the captain and other officers were holding a consultation and gathering arms together at one and the same moment. Revolvers and cutlasses were passed up to the little knot of lads, who had hurriedly been made acquainted with the facts of the case; and, as the grip of the honest steel came home kindly to their hearts, the old, true British blood arose in them, dispelling the sleep from their eyes and tightening their muscles. This night should be talked of in their far-off northern homes with awe-struck wonder.

The clamour forward became greater; the mutineers had found the spirits, and were already at work on their second case of Benedictine. As the fiery spirit worked in their veins, the men became imbued with genuine Dutch courage; their worst passions were loosened, and now, drunk with spirits and anger combined, their fancied grievances pressing more closely than ever on their inflamed imaginations, they started aft to wreak a terrible retribution on their enemies.

Just then the officers came on deck, and, with the eye of a born commander the captain realised the situation. With muttered oaths the crew came stumbling aft through the

darkness, and the man at the wheel, roused by the unwonted noise, and remembering his part in the fracas, drew his knife and made a vicious stab at the back of the second mate, who was just then on the con.* That worthy officer was more on his guard, however, than the Spaniard imagined, for with an agile twist he avoided the coming thrust, and, as it expended its force on thin air, his fist shot out and took the helmsman heavily under the jaw. He dropped like a log. By this time the mutineers had reached the poop. The skipper had hardly patience to parley with the men, but, knowing the stringent regulations of the Board of Trade, he endeavoured to pacify the frenzied men. In vain, for they laughed a drunken laugh, and Jansen, the ringleader, flung an iron belaying-pin at Captain J——'s head. Had it found its mark, the skipper would have sailed on his last command; but the missile, glancing from the rail, ricocheted against McLean's forehead. He fell stunned, and the captain, seeing this, ordered his little body of staunch men to "clear the decks." Instructions had previously been given to avoid slaughter, and consequently the pistols were silent; but with a jolly "hurrah" the lads, headed by their three officers, jumped the ladder and went head-first into the scrimmage.

"Tackle 'em low," sang out Mr. Scott, as he fetched down Gaspardo, the sailmaker, with the flat of his cutlass.

It was a glorious fight! Not a man but had some gash to show, not a lad whose countenance retained its virgin freshness. But British pluck told—now as it always must—and steadily the mutineers were driven "forrard."

Scott, desirous of atoning for his negligence, laid about him like a veritable Trojan; his Highland blood was up, and his eyes flashed fire. Like a scythe he swung his weapon. Knives and handspikes were futile against his impetuous attack, and so, manfully backed by his boys, he won his way along the now slippery deck.

Little McLean had by this time recovered his senses, and, burning with indignation at the knock-down blow he had

* "On the con"—that is, superintending the steering of the ship.—ED.

sustained, he staggered along the deck towards the fight. The mutineers were nearly conquered, but they halted for a moment by the galley and strove to collect themselves together for one more rush. Jansen, goaded to desperation by the failure of his plan, and well knowing the consequences of his insubordination, harangued the crew with a devotion worthy of a better cause. Then, lifting a huge iron bar which he had taken from the windlass, he made a savage rush at the breathless second mate. Scott saw him coming, and attempted to defend himself ; but the onrush was too sudden—he slipped, and in a moment his head would have been smashed like an egg, but just at this instant Rob McLean, to whom the early cry of “tackle ’em low” still seemed a command, collected his senses sufficiently to make a dive at the giant Dutchman’s legs. The mouse and the lion over again! Down toppled Jansen, and his head came with a sickening crack against a ringbolt ; then he lay still. The cook, seeing how affairs stood, snatched his cleaver from his galley and made a vicious cut at poor Robbie’s head ; but a Winchester rifle cracked in the gathering dawn, and the “doctor” dropped, shot through the brain. The rest was easy. The mutineers were speedily disarmed, and surrendered at discretion. The captain, whose timely rifle-shot had saved the young apprentice’s life, ordered them into irons straightway, and then bore up, with his tiny crew, for Port Stanley. On arriving there, the whole of the mutineers were sentenced by the Naval Court to a well-deserved spell of punishment. And then Robbie wrote home and told them “all about it.”

MY FIRST SHIPWRECK

A NARRATIVE OF FACT

BY F. T. BULLEN

“**N**OW then, young feller,” said one of the visitors to me, “you’re setting there very comfortable. Where’s your ‘cuffer’? Let’s have a merchant-ship’s yarn, cain’t ye? We’ve had enough whaling this trip.”

Thus adjured, I took up my parable, not without misgivings as to the reception such a commonplace yarn as mine would have among these seasoned adventurers.

On my first voyage I sailed with an uncle, who was master of an old barrel-bellied hooker like this, called the *Mary Ann*. We had discharged at Demerara, and, being too leaky to ship sugar, were bundled off to that last refuge of the unfortunate, the Gulf of Mexico, for mahogany. I don’t know how it was worked, but we were so long getting our freight at the various roadsteads we called at, that before we were loaded the “norther” season arrived. Those tremendous gales dispose of a goodly number of old rattletraps sent there for that purpose, as the *Mary Ann* undoubtedly was.

Now, my uncle was a just man, though too handy with his rope’s-end for my liking, and he didn’t want to have me on board when the crash came. So he asked an old friend commanding a grand barque, called the *Discoverer*, to give me a passage home, as he was just about to sail. There was no difficulty about the transfer of such a midget as I was, and the next day saw me a member of the *Discoverer’s* crew.

She was indeed a noble vessel, built for the purpose of Arctic research, of the best materials, and strengthened in every way that experience could suggest, rigged and found regardless of expense. I have often wondered since how she ever came to be on the Mexican coast, where few vessels of her stamp were to be seen in those days. She was well manned, too, and only half her crew were foreigners, which was remarkable. The skipper, who may be still a-fishing, I will only call Captain S., in case of accidents. He was a good man, a good seaman, and wonderfully kind withal, but with grog at hand he couldn't keep sober if his life depended on it.

The morning after I joined we got under way at daybreak, so as to get a good offing before dark ; but even at that early hour the old man had been paying his respects to the bottle so frequently that he was comfortably drunk. If he'd only been uncomfortably drunk, he might have kept out of the way ; but, as it was, he was a nuisance, meandering about like an amiable loony, getting in everybody's way, and hindering operations generally.

We'd got the anchor up and "catted," but as the mate wanted to get the rags on her, we just left the anchor hanging by the cat-tackle without passing the ring-stopper, the fall being stretched across the deck and made fast. We'd got the to'gallants'ls on her, and she was making about four knots, when there was the most infernal racket forrard you ever heard—the old man had been and let go the anchor. My ! you should just see that cable fly over the windlass. Every last link was on deck, one hundred and twenty fathom on each side, the ends shackled together round the foremast. We were off the bank in twenty-five fathom water, and, going at the rate I have mentioned, there was no chance of stopping the flying chain. "Jump on it," yells the mate. "Jump on it yourself," says the fellows ; "why, you're as bad as the old man himself." So it ran out to the last link. Every man was praying that it would carry away, but, like the rest of her gear, it was too good for that ; and it swung her round into the wind, bringing her up all

standing. And there stood the skipper, with his finger in his mouth, looking like a bat at noon, and trying to figure out what was the matter.

Swearing didn't mend matters, although there was enough to sink the ship if oaths were pounds. Not another hand's-turn would the men do that day; they declared they'd want all their energies for next day to get her under way again. The mate couldn't help himself, and the old fellow went to his bunk, so the chaps had it all their own way. Even the sails were left hanging in the gear, and a pretty mess there would have been if it had come on to blow. Next morning we made another start, the skipper drunk as usual, but sufficiently wise to keep his own end of the ship. It was an awful job, and if the mate hadn't got a demi-john of rum out of the old man's berth, which kept the chaps in good humour, there'd have been mutiny, sure. However, we got away again by noon—this time for good.

Well, it's always been a mystery to me how some ships get out and home again, for I've been in some queer ones, but nothing short of a miracle could ever have got that ship home safe. In the daytime routine work went on fairly regular, but at night the ship was pretty well left to go her own way. 'The second mate was laid up, being crippled by a log of timber in Sant' Anna, and the skipper was supposed to keep his watch. His idea of watch-keeping was a splendid one. He used to turn out when the mate called him, and "freshen the nip" with two or three stiff tots of grog. Then he'd lie down on the poop and die—at least, he might as well have been dead for all the "savvy" you could get into him. 'This kind of thing suited his watch down to the ground; they didn't want anything better. But it couldn't last, everybody knew that.

We'd been blundering on like this for about a fortnight—lovely weather all the time—when one night I was wakened by a tremendous kicking at the door of the little after-cabin where I slept with the steward. He was awake, and told me to get out and see what was up. Upon opening the door, there was the helmsman scared out of life, and shouting, "The

ship's ashore!—the ship's ashore! Where's the skipper?" I laughed at him, but a sudden bump and jolt, unlike anything I had ever felt before, laid me flat and knocked all the laugh out of me at once. Joe said he had been leaning over the wheel thinking—*i.e.* fast asleep—when the wheel spun round and nearly knocked his brains out, and the next thing he knew she was bumping like this!

There wasn't a man awake in the ship. There was no lookout, no watch on deck—in fact, they didn't know whose watch it was. I found the skipper lying flat on his back on the poop, and it took me fully ten minutes to wake him. I only succeeded then by pulling a handful of hair out of his head. Then he lifted himself half-way up, and said, "Wash marrer?" I yelled, "The ship's ashore!—the ship's ashore, sir!" At last the words, of such dreadful import to a seaman, seemed to penetrate the thick armour of dullness around his poor brain, for he rose staggeringly to his feet, saying in a low voice, but distinctly, "Call all hands." "They're all waiting for you, sir," I replied, very promptly; a ring of eager faces surrounding us furnishing instant proof of the statement. He passed his hand in a tired fashion over his face, and then issued his first order, "Back the mainyard."

Now, there was but a gentle breeze blowing when she took the ground, which by this time had died away to almost a calm. Therefore the order given was exasperating and futile. Had there been any wind it would have been less so, but still useless, for the ship was no longer moving over the reef, or capable of being turned in any way. Except for an occasional grating bump, when the long heavy Gulf swell found her an obstacle in its mighty sweep over the reef, she might as well have been in dry dock. However, for half an hour that lunatic kept all hands pulley-hauling at the braces, trimming the yards first on one tack and then on the other, for all the world like a parcel of boys in a training-ship bedded in a cabbage-garden, as at Feltham. A man was kept at the wheel, too, bewildered by receiving orders he had no power to execute, such as, "Luff you may; no higher; steady as she

goes!" (good heavens!), the rudder all the time being jammed firmly between two immense blocks of coral, about fifty tons each.

Even a boy could see what was going to happen directly. We had a good-tempered crowd, but I doubt whether a man-of-war's crew would have long submitted to be worried inconsequently by a maudlin fool when they knew not how soon all their energies would be required in a life-and-death struggle. So, when their patience was exhausted, they quietly gathered aft in front of the skipper, where he sat on the poop-ladder, and through a spokesman told him they were going to have a rest till he got fit to command. At this he wept mournfully—a sight to make you sick at heart. All hands bundled forward and began to pack up ready for a shift, in case of a chance to save a few clothes. But the pipes were hardly alight before it was "Lay aft, all hands." Out they went promptly, and mustered, as before, at the break of the poop. Then the skipper whimperingly demanded what they proposed doing, and why they treated him so. Their answers were brief, pointed, and emphatic, though I'm afraid their choice of terms was not happy. "Go forward, men," said the mate; and the crowd dispersed directly. All of them had not entered the forecastle door when the cry of "Lay aft, all hands," came again. This time there was a shout: "If we do come aft again, we'll heave you overboard." There was peace after that.

By this time it was about four bells (2 a.m.), but perfectly dark except for the feeble starlight. You know how dark a moonless night is in the Tropics, when there isn't a cloud above—when all the dome overhead is blue-black, and the stars don't shine, but show like points of polished steel. Had there been a competent man in charge, much could have been done even then; but, under the circumstances, we could only wait for daylight and the sobering of the skipper. Meanwhile the carpenter, though crippled in both legs by pestering insect-bites, crawled painfully to where our only useful boat was secured bottom-up on the skids. He knew that, having been

exposed like that for several months to the direct rays of the sun, she would float about as buoyantly as a colander. Therefore he worked hard to caulk her against the coming light, since without a boat, except the little ramshackle gig, our plight was hopeless. Nobody thought of sleep, but hung anxiously about wishing for day.

Little by little came that marvellous change over the face of the sea and sky that we witness daily and think so little of, while dwellers in crowded cities often pass their whole lives without knowing anything of its glories. First a tiny streak of tenderest green along the edge of the horizon, then suddenly overhead a blush of lovely rose, warming the stern blue-black of the infinite depths with definite promise of living light to come, and even now here. Then rays and streamers and cloudlets of colour, impossible to blend or reproduce by mortal hand, appear in quick succession—heralds majestic of the monarch to follow. A great glow of crimson centred with gold, and the bridegroom leaves his chamber, the giant commences his daily race and battle against the darkness, disease, and death.

Within a mile and a half of the ship was a small island, mostly sand, but on the further side thickly covered with rocks. About five hundred yards from the shore an ugly jagged-looking reef of boulders encircled the whole island apparently. Myriads of birds, coming and going about the beach, made a deafening clamour. There was not a tree or bush visible—altogether a truly desert island. But beneath us—well, I've seen some sights among coral reefs since, but never have I seen anything like that. The water was like a mirror, every least thing showing boldly on the bottom, so that the thousand beauties of that submarine forest were as definite as any picture, infinitely more so than many I have seen. There were trees, columns, palaces, bridges, churches, gardens—everything that the imagination could compass. And the colours of all these marvellous forms were hardly rivalled by those of the sunrise. Nothing crude, nothing glaring, but all mellowed into tenderness by the limpid blue of the water. About, around,

or through the innumerable windings of that wonderful maze wandered carelessly the thousand varied forms of fish that constituted its population. Most of these, too, were gorgeous beyond belief; but occasionally, as if to heighten their beauty by contrast, some gnome-like shape of dull leaden or livid hue moved mysteriously among the loveliness like the shadow of death. Especially was this true of a great grey shark that hung motionless in one of the avenues immediately beneath us, his cold, dead, green eye steadfastly fixed upon the ship.

As soon as the mate had summoned the hands to "turn to," all hands went aft and asked for the captain. When he appeared, sober, they respectfully informed him that in their opinion the first thing necessary was the landing of sufficient stores on the islet to support life, in the event of a "norther" springing up suddenly and destroying the ship. They would do, they said, all that they could for the safety of the ship; but since the position was so full of danger, it was only reasonable that some thought should be taken for their lives.

The skipper said he considered their request only natural, and at once gave orders for stores to be got up, and the boat to be put over the side. For it was evident that, before landing stores could be attempted, some channel through the fringing reef must be found, also a suitable landing-place. So a boat's crew were told off to explore the vicinity, while the rest of the hands busied themselves getting up stores. The boat was in the water, and manned long before the skipper was ready for his tour; and when he emerged from the cabin, we needed no second look to see that he'd been "at it again." But he made a great show of energy, gave the mate a multitude of instructions to be carried out during his absence, then, turning to my insignificance standing behind him, told me to put a rope over for him to get into the boat by. I did so, securing it well to an iron belaying-pin, and actually putting the bight in his hand. I turned for a moment to answer some call, but before I could turn again there was a mighty splash. Such was the muddle of his poor brain, that he had dropped the secure rope I gave him, picked up a loose end, and, clinging to

that, flung himself over the rail. He rose to the surface blowing like a grampus. The boat being only about a foot from him, he was immediately hauled in, venting unintelligible threats upon "that slippery hitch" and its maker. Explanation didn't convince him. Away they went, the blazing sun being sufficient to dry him in a very few minutes, even if the plunge did little to sober him.

After the stores had been prepared for shipment, one would naturally have expected to see something undertaken for the purpose of getting the ship afloat again. Nothing whatever was done. One would have thought that the mate should certainly have undertaken some such work, even on his own responsibility; but you couldn't blame him too much, his position under the captain being a very peculiar one. At any rate, after about an hour's work, we did nothing but fish or loaf about awaiting the skipper's return, the weather remaining perfect, not a breath of wind stirring.

About noon the boat came back, having made the circuit of the island. A good landing-place had been discovered, although the entrance through the reef, being only about sixty feet wide, needed care in negotiating it. They brought a couple of buckets full of eggs, which they said were amazingly plentiful, but beyond that they had no news. Shall I be believed when I say that not another stroke of work was done that day? The crew were willing, the weather was lovely, the ship no battered old hulk not worth saving, but fit to brave the seas for another half century. Why did we remain idle? Because our commander lay helplessly drunk in his cabin, nor was the mate the man to dare an usurpation of his authority, justifiable as such an act would undoubtedly have been. So, sleeping, smoking, lounging, that beautiful day wasted away.

Perfect calm reigned the night through. At daylight all hands were "turned to" to commence operations which ought to have been carried out on the previous day. A large "kedge anchor" was carried astern as far as our hawsers and mooring chains would allow, but when they dropped it (the skipper in the boat, mind) there was less than two fathoms of water

beneath them. Being but a child, I could not then rightly estimate the mountainous folly of what was going on, but I have often wondered since however the men stood it. Why, the ship drew eighteen feet of water ! Yet that imbecile was proposing to heave her uphill into twelve feet. Only sailors can believe a thing of that sort, for they know what incredible marvels of foolery are performed at times on board ship.

The boat returned, the windlass was manned, and the hawsers hove tight. But right there operations came to a full stop. We couldn't burst the good rope, we couldn't move the ship. Perhaps there wasn't much heaving done. I don't know, but I think that under the circumstances it was highly probable. Coming to a standstill, the men leaned on the windlass levers discussing the situation. The mate had gone aft, but a silence as of the grave reigned in the cabin, where the captain was sleeping off his liquor.

What awakened him I don't know, but, before he got nearly sober, he came on deck again and began ordering the yards to be hauled about, sail made, etc., as if the ship, instead of being a mass immovable by anything short of a tempest or an earthquake, was to be shifted by such means. The men stood his fooling very well indeed for about an hour, then, feeling that as an amusement it palled upon them, they came aft in a body, and forcibly stated their intention to do no more until authority was delegated entirely to the mate, or the captain was quite sober. To his maudlin remonstrances and copious tears they turned contemptuously deaf ears, retiring again to their own end of the ship for rest as well as reflection.

The ship was doomed, there could be no possible doubt. Even had the smartest seaman afloat been now in charge, he could have done nothing ; for, although the weather had been perfect since the disaster, the long swell which crept across the great reef moved her hull sufficiently to damage the bottom greatly, as the pieces of timber floating up every now and then showed very plainly. The weather was about to change. A filmy veil seemed to dim the bright blue of the

sky, while the air near the surface was so clear as to render the most distant objects startlingly distinct and well-defined. Still, nothing more was done that day except the landing of a few stores, just sufficient to support life for a few days.

The night passed without incident of any kind. Just before daylight a breeze sprang up from N.N.W., accompanied by much greater increase in the swell than was referable to the weight of the wind. The effect upon the ship was very serious. She writhed and bumped about upon the jagged surface of the reef in an alarming fashion, every timber complaining fiercely of the severity of her treatment. The deck began to open and shut at the seams, the deck-houses twisted and split, while the great masts trembled unceasingly.

The wind increased rapidly, till at eight bells, breakfast-time, it was blowing a moderate gale, which covered the face of the reef with foam. As it was evidently madness to wait any longer, the pinnacle was hauled alongside and loaded with the wardrobes of the crew, with such other necessities as seemed indispensable, the sick boatswain being made as comfortable in the stern-sheets as was possible. I was looking over the rail very wistfully at the boat, when one of the men called me down into her. I needed no second invitation, but descended like a monkey, snugly esconcing myself by the side of the boatswain. The mate called me back—I don't know why; but I cheerfully disobeyed him, knowing full well that his authority now was a thing of nought.

The painter was cast adrift, and away we went for the shore; but may I never make such a journey in a boat again! The swell had increased so rapidly that it was now appalling in its height. As it travelled over the shallow broken reef for about ten miles before it reached us, it gathered momentum and size until it became a range of snowy mountains, between whose seething summits the top of the reef almost appeared, so great was the displacement of the water. Our men were not very expert at boat-handling, as they admitted; but I think they must have risen to the height of a great emergency that morning. Although, when we descended into the green

valleys between those mighty breakers, their frowning crests shut out the sky, we did not ship a drop of water, or even swerve an appreciable bit from the only safe course, bow on to the roll of sea. When we neared the fringing barrier of rocks, the sight was dreadful, the roar of angry waves was deafening; nor, at first sight, was it possible to pick out the position of the entrance which had been so carefully marked two days before. Indeed, considering how narrow was the passage, it was marvellous that it was to be distinguished at all among such a tumult of breakers.

However, our helmsman was a man of great courage and decision; so, having decided that the channel was in a certain position, he steered for it, the six oarsmen pulling for their very lives. A moment or two of hubbub as we shot through the tiny break in that gigantic thundering barrier, a few drops of spray sprinkled over us, and all was peace. In that quiet lagoon behind the rocks there was as yet hardly a ripple on the water, so we ran the boat up on the smooth sand as quietly as if we were in dock.

A few minutes sufficed to tranship what we had brought to the little hill where the stores were piled; then, as time was most precious, the boat was manned and departed again, leaving my small self and the crippled officer behind. They had no sooner gone, than I mounted a big boulder to watch anxiously their progress towards the ship. Hardly breathing, I saw them face the channel through which we had sped so smoothly in coming. They were hurled back thrice as if by a gigantic hand, but undauntedly they persevered, the fourth time seeing them succeed.

But the task that now lay before them was a hopeless one. With a whole gale of wind in their teeth, assisted by such enormous breakers as I have never seen anywhere, not even on the Manukau* at its wildest, the issue of such a contest could not be long in doubt. But, remembering their ship-

* The bar at the entrance of Manukau harbour, in New Zealand, where there is often a tremendous surf. The *Orpheus*, a fine new corvette, was wrecked there in 1862, a number of lives being lost.—E.N.

mates still on board, with only a crazy little gig at their disposal, that was hardly fit for ordinary harbour work, they toiled on with magnificent courage and energy against overwhelming odds.

The scene was unspeakably grand. The rollers advanced in almost straight lines extending for miles, the distance between them being kept almost exactly the same. Slowly, majestically, they advanced, unhindered, growing greater as they came, and accompanied by an incessant vibrant roar that, blending with the howl of the gale, overpowered all other sounds.

As each immense mass reached the ship, it rose in towers of white, out of the top of which could be seen, like supplicating arms, the quivering, bending masts. As it passed away she would be fully visible for half a minute or so, still entire, streaming at every pore, but mutely testifying to the fidelity and skill of her builders. For some time I quite lost sight of the boat in the clouds of spray that flew so thickly above the turmoil. Presently I caught sight of her comparatively near the ship, and still heading towards her. Then she rose upon the back of a roller, which hurled her like a piece of driftwood fully two hundred yards at a sweep. From that time I saw no more of her, and in a perfect agony of sorrow I slipped from my perch and ran to tell the boatswain that I believed they were lost. But, before I had finished sobbing, the boat shot into the lagoon again, her crew so utterly exhausted that they could not paddle to the beach, but allowed her to drift thither at her own sweet will. They were not only exhausted, but heartbroken at the thought that seven of their shipmates were doomed to die almost within hail, while they were powerless to help. Gradually they recovered sufficiently to crawl out of the boat and up on the beach, where I had made a fire and got a pot of tea ready for them.

Their grief and rage at their impotence were pitiful to see. Again and again they broke out into incoherent denunciations of the terrible circumstances, vainly attempting to lighten their burden of sorrow by thus unpacking their hearts of words.

When suddenly the gig appeared !

All safe on board of her, and paddling to shore with two hastily roughed-out planks for oars and an Indian paddle left on board by one of the visitors at Tonala. We all sat speechless while the boat slowly neared us, wondering whether we had really gone out of our minds or not, and this was simply a freak of our disordered fancy. But the grating of the boat's keel upon the beach dispelled our fears, and there was a scene. Men hugged each other, laughing and crying by turns, quite hysterical with joy and revulsion of feeling. The birds, utterly unafraid of us, waddled amongst us, pecking impartially at our legs, and getting pretty roughly handled in consequence. The gale roared overhead, but we were too happy to notice anything. We were reunited ; the lost found ; the dead returned to life.

After the first rush of emotion was over came the inevitable question to the new-comers, "However did you manage it? What did you do?"

They said that after watching the efforts of the boatmen to reach them, and seeing them swept away like straws, they were inclined to give themselves up for lost, more especially since every breaker completely overwhelmed the ship, sometimes hardly allowing them to get breath or a fresh grip before the next one came. The ship, too, was lifted bodily by every wave, and let fall with an awful crash, pounding the very rocks to powder beneath her, so that how she held together was a miracle. In the capacity of the gig to carry them ashore they could not believe ; but, as if to destroy every hope, they could not find a single oar. The carpenter, suffering as he was, managed to rough out a couple of nondescript things which might serve their turn. These and the before-mentioned paddle were their sole equipment. The steward, careful man, covered the bottom of the boat with tins of preserved provisions, feeling that they, by their compact weight, would add to her stability as well as being a most useful addition to the food supply if ever they reached the shore.

How they managed to launch her without banging her to

pieces like a bundle of sticks I could never rightly learn, except that they were hardly clear of the ship before they were swept on the crest of a mighty roller like a straw, several hundred fathoms in a minute or two.

There were seven of them in the frail craft, a fairly good load at any time, but in a sea like that it seemed impossible to keep such a cockle-shell afloat. However, that miracle *was* performed, for they arrived safely out of the very jaws of death, as I have said.

Manifestly, the first thing necessary was to make some sort of shelter, for, in addition to the autumnal chill, which was trying to our thin blood, a steady, soaking rain set in. The boats were hauled up on the beach above high-water mark, where they were canted over and shores put under the upper gunwales, thus forming a sort of shed. The boats' sails were spread on the sand underneath this impromptu shelter, and all hands got under cover with such scraps of food as each was able to secure. Night came on apace, bringing no cessation of the gale or the downpour; but the solid earth was beneath us, so, in spite of the hurly-burly above, we slept soundly. About midnight there was a big alarm raised by the occupants of the gig, which had not been hauled up high enough, and so got upset by a tremendous wave which reached far above high-water mark. This was very disquieting, for we had imagined that no sea would get up inside the lagoon. But the tide had risen so high that the fringe of rocks no longer presented an effectual barrier to the awful breakers assaulting it. They overleaped it and sped shorewards again, as if threatening to cover the tiny islet itself.

Beyond giving us a good fright and a little additional wetting there was no harm done, and the night dragged its slow length into morning again. With the dawn the rain ceased, enabling us to make some little progress towards erecting a more comfortable habitation. An immense fire was lighted out of the abundance of driftwood that was piled along the beach, hot food was prepared, and we had a first-class meal. The ship was still erect, her masts still standing; but

from her bilge protruded a large log of mahogany—unmistakable evidence that her back was broken.

Now, of our life on that island for seven days a very good tale could be told; but my yarn is already longer than it ought to be, so I'll just gather up the loose ends, as it were, and heave-to.

We were getting fairly reconciled to our lot—in fact, I was enjoying myself in prime fashion—when along came a homeward-bound French barque that saw our signal, hove-to, and sent a boat ashore for us. She would have given us all a passage, but the old man wouldn't go. He'd made up his mind to sail the pinnace to Sisal in Campêche, about 120 miles, and invited six of the crew to go with him. All the afterguard did so, except the bo'sun, and away we went in the Frenchman for Havana, leaving the skipper and his merry men to their own devices. We got to Cuba in about ten days, and were handed over to the care of the British Consul, the jolly, friendly Français sailing again immediately for home.

Nearly two years afterwards I was in London, looking for a ship. One morning I strolled into Green's Home Shipping Office, and met the steward, who had been one of the crowd left with the skipper on the island. He was a lovely creature to look at. His face had been hacked about dreadfully and badly mended, so that he looked as if a steam-harrow had run over him. He told me that four days after we left them they sailed according to programme, having a nice run to Sisal. There the skipper sold the boat and gear for four hundred dollars, which he divided up man-fashion, as well as about two hundred more which he had stowed away. Then they had a gorgeous spree. They wanted to run the town as well as paint it red; but the soldiers couldn't see it, so there was war. Of course the invaders got "pie," my friend the steward being a fairly representative example of that particular pastry. When they had all got well again, the skipper of a Norwegian barque gave them a passage—home, I was going to say, but they didn't get further in that particular ship than the Gun Cay, Bahamas, where they were cast away again. You'd have

thought some of them would have certainly gone under this time, for several of the barque's crew were drowned; but no, they all survived, being picked up by a Yankee "three and after" and taken to Nassau. There they all separated, getting ships for different parts of the world. I reckon they kept mighty dark about their experiences, or they'd have stood a poor chance of getting a ship at all, such a crowd of Jonahs.

I had hardly finished, when a hoarse voice above roared, "Now then, gamming crews away," and our visitors, amid a chorus of "so-longs," tumbled up double sharp and into their respective boats. The lords of creation—their skippers—followed in stately fashion, leaving us once more to the enjoyment (?) of our own den, and such sleep as we could get in the few hours yet remaining before daylight dawned again.

NOTE.—This yarn is supposed to be told to the crews of whaling vessels, on a visit to another ship, which explains the talk at the commencement and finish of it.—ED.

MR. ROBERT LYDE, AND ONE BOY

THIS is a very spirited yarn, dating back to the year 1691; it is narrated by the principal actor, Robert Lyde, mate of the *Friends' Adventure*, of Topsham, near Exmouth.

I do not propose, however, to tell the story in Mr. Lyde's own words. Whatever he may have been as a man of action, he does not shine as a story-teller, save in the important merit of being very explicit; his account is spun-out and somewhat tedious, so I prefer to give it in my own way, sticking closely to facts, as narrated by him.

Lyde, as a seaman on board another Topsham craft, had a very unpleasant experience in the year 1689, the vessel being captured by a St. Malo privateer. Having seen some vessels thus captured on a former occasion, he had formed a solemn compact with the mate that, in case such misfortune should come their way, they would, with the assistance of others of the crew, if possible, but failing that, by themselves, make an effort to recapture their ship, so long as there were not more than ten Frenchmen opposed to them. This was a considerable improvement upon the theory—adopted later on by no less a person than Lord Nelson—that one Englishman is equal to three Frenchmen!

However, the fates were not kind to them: they were captured, and safely lodged in a French prison, where, according to Robert Lyde, they were treated with such barbarity that, upon regaining his liberty, he resolved to dare anything rather than repeat the experience.

In the year 1691 he shipped as mate on board the *Friends'*

Adventure, and here he appears to have swaggered a little as to what he would do in the event of being taken, for when, one fine day, a French privateer appeared and gave chase, the skipper asked him whether he was in the same mind about it. Lyde stuck to it that he would have a try, and suggested to the skipper that he should pray for a strong wind after they were captured, so that the privateer and her prize should be separated. Capture was inevitable, the *Friends' Adventure* being a little craft of eighty tons without a single gun.

Having "seized" the two parts of the topsail halyards together, so that no one should be able to shorten sail very readily, Lyde went below to make some preparations, hiding a blunderbuss and ammunition among the casks of wine between decks. Coming on deck again, he found that sail had been shortened, in spite of his precautions, and that the enemy was close at hand; upon which he beat in the head of a five-gallon keg of his own wine, and put several pounds of sugar in it; then he drank the skipper's health in this somewhat cloying beverage, and presently the Frenchmen came alongside.

Lyde was apparently very polite to them, stepping down the side to hand them on board, until one of them helped himself to his coat, which was only the prelude to general pillage of all the property of the crew.

Lyde had no luck, for when the enemy had finished plundering, they left only him and a boy on board with seven Frenchmen. "I could heartily have wished," he says, very naturally, "they had left a man in the boy's room." However, he was not down-hearted, for he asked the skipper, before they parted, what he had done with a bag of money, and, upon being informed that it had been given up to the privateer's officer, he said he did not doubt but he would have secured it, by retaking the ship—he was an amazingly confident person.

In three hours the privateer was out of sight, and Lyde immediately commenced operations, offering to bring up a barrel of wine, in the hope of making the Frenchmen drunk.

The offer was accepted, but the enemy was too wary to fall into the trap, though Lyde set the example by freely partaking himself.

He then took the boy into his confidence, propounding his scheme of recapture ; but the lad very naturally declined to enter upon such a desperate undertaking. However, Lyde did not despair of converting him. A day or two later he says : "Then I called the boy down betwixt decks and read two or three chapters in the Bible, and then used all my endeavour to persuade him to assist me ; but by all the arguments I could use I could not prevail at this time. Then I took a brick and whet my knife upon it, and told the boy I would not use my knife upon any account until I was carried into France, except it were to cut the throats of the Frenchmen." This kind of bloody oath, however, only frightened the boy, who immediately ran on deck.

According to Lyde, the Frenchmen were shocking bad sailors, and whenever he prayed for a foul wind, to prevent their getting into port, his prayer was answered, so they beat about in the Channel, making but little way towards St. Malo, whither they were bound.

One Sunday morning he was asked to breakfast in the cabin, and went ; "but the sight of the Frenchmen did immediately take away my stomach." He pretended he was sea-sick, and went to seek the boy, entreating him to knock down only one, and he would tackle the remainder ; he related his prison experiences, and this recital moved his companion somewhat, so presently he consented to floor the helmsman with an iron bar, while Lyde went into the cabin and attacked the four men who were there, having a nap after breakfast. Two others were pumping, as the craft was very leaky, and one at the helm made up the seven.

Arming himself with a huge, heavy crow-bar, having a claw at one end and a sharp point at the other, Lyde took off his cap and coat and crept into the cabin, holding his formidable weapon in the centre with both hands, for the cabin was very low and there was not room to wield it.

Quiet as he was, one of the Frenchmen immediately perceived him, and attempted to rise, but instantly received a terrible blow upon his forehead; another, roused by the scuffle, was partially disabled. The skipper, in his bunk, sat up to see what was going on, and him Lyde greeted with a severe jab of the crow-bar behind the ear; the second man, recovering, then rushed at him, head down, but only to be met once more by the point of the bar, and as he fell Lyde seized him and flung him out into the steerage.

Meanwhile, the boy, directly he heard Lyde commence operations, had attacked the helmsman, striking him twice, and stunning him for the moment; but he had not Lyde's muscle behind his blows, and the man quickly recovered his senses.

Leaving the senseless men in the cabin and steerage, Lyde went to look for the two who were pumping; but his last assailant, or rather, his latest victim, had come to his senses, and was crawling along behind him, endeavouring to warn the two men at the pump. He was successful, and these two rushed at Lyde, who, encumbered by the low deck, could not get a good blow at either; they closed with him, seizing his bar, and then there ensued a fearful struggle.

Lyde must have been a man of immense bodily strength, or he could not have lasted two minutes. He first attempted a ruse—having in vain endeavoured to induce the boy to attack his opponents in the rear—calling to the boy to seize the end of the crow-bar, and pull with the Frenchmen, intending himself to let go suddenly, so that they might fall backwards. He did let go, and was taking out his knife "to traverse amongst them," when the others, seeing his intention, dropped the crow-bar and seized his right arm, the skipper and helmsman, revived, joined in, so that the gallant Lyde had four to tackle him, while the boy was afraid to lay about their heads with the iron—he struck once very ineffectively, the bar slipping and damaging Lyde's hand.

Lyde still contrived to keep his feet, and, getting hold of a marling-spike, used it with some effect. Then it was wrested from him, but the boy disposed of one man for the time by

another blow, and the marling-spike somehow rolled away out of reach.

Then, with a tremendous effort, Lyde managed to fling one man heavily against the other two, and eventually got out his knife, with which he killed one, and the other two, crying for quarter, released him and went on deck.

Things looked a little brighter now, and Lyde, securing the steerage door, and placing the boy on sentry there with a loaded blunderbuss, went to look for the two wounded men and those who had cried for quarter. The latter he found forward, very much frightened, running aloft when they saw him approaching; however, he made them come down, clapped them below, and nailed the hatch down.

One man had slept through all the commotion, in a separate little cabin; him Lyde now woke up, and put him below with his two shipmates, nailing down the hatch once more. The two wounded men were at length discovered hiding under the foretopsail aloft; they were in a terrible plight, bleeding from their wounds. However, Lyde could not afford to trifle with them, so he sent them below to their companions, called up one of the uninjured men to assist in navigating the vessel, and secured the hatch finally—he had made good his boast!

After some days, during which they had heavy weather, and Lyde and the other two laboured incessantly, handling the sails, they anchored at Starcross, below Topsham, at the mouth of the estuary of the river Exe, and sent the wounded men on shore. The others he conveyed next day to Exeter, and gave them into the custody of the mayor.

In his absence, the owners, who did not wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to Lyde, or pay him salvage claims, attempted to place a man in charge; but the customs officers prevented this.

The cargo of wine was consigned to London, and Lyde, at the second attempt, narrowly escaping capture the first time by some French privateers, got round into the Thames. But he was not welcome, the owners and “freighters” had, it is to be presumed, heavily insured ship and cargo, and Lyde’s

plucky recovery of it was inconvenient. They placed every possible obstacle in his way, and refused to pay the men whom he had engaged to bring the vessel round.

However, by the sound advice of a friend and the influence of "an honourable person," he brought his case before the High Court of Admiralty, claiming half the value of the vessel and cargo as salvage; he obtained a verdict, and, though some accusations were brought against him on other issues, he came out on top in the end.

Now, this a very wonderful tale, and one might almost be disposed to question whether Robert Lyde was not "drawing a long bow" and seeking to test the reader's powers of belief. However, there is a certain confirmation of his yarn in that most respectable paper, *The London Gazette*, in which it is briefly related; so it evidently obtained full credence at the time. Moreover, Robert Lyde is spoken of as "a lusty young fellow (which he certainly was!) of three-and-twenty"; and the name of the heroic boy is also given—John Wright, sixteen years of age—together with some details as to the precise position of the *Friends' Adventure* when she was captured, the armament and crew of the privateer, and the name of her captain—Geraldine.

I may therefore safely present this to you as a true yarn; and we will hope that the intrepid Mr. Robert Lyde speedily obtained a command, for which he was certainly well fitted—with John Wright as one of his crew.

LOSS OF THE "ABERGAVENNY," EAST INDIAMAN

ON the 1st of February, 1805, there sailed from Portsmouth a little squadron of East Indiamen, bound for the East, under convoy of a frigate.

The English Channel is usually a turbulent sailing-ground at this season of the year, and the squadron encountered strong westerly winds, which greatly retarded its progress. However, by the morning of the 5th the Indiamen, having parted from the frigate almost immediately after sailing, had battled their way past the Bill of Portland, being some thirty miles to the westward of it. The wind continuing strong and adverse, the captain of the *Wexford*, who was appointed commodore, signalled to run for Portland Roads, where good shelter is afforded from westerly gales. Arriving near the Bill of Portland, all the ships having pilots on board ran for the anchorage; the *Abergavenny*, however, had to wait some hours for a pilot, and did not bear up for the Roads until about 3 p.m., being then about six miles to the westward of Portland Bill, round which she had to pass to the anchorage.

It may not appear to be a difficult matter, if you look at a large map of Portland, to get into this anchorage in the bay on the east side of the island—or, rather, peninsular—of Portland; there was at that time no breakwater, as at present, to get round, and though the absence of this rendered the anchorage very insecure in easterly gales, it was all the easier to get in there.

There are, however, certain dangers to be avoided off the Bill of Portland when coming from the westward; one is the dangerous "race" caused by the flood-tide rushing round

the Bill, having been partially dammed by the peninsular, which raises a breaking sea, and in which a sailing vessel would be quite helpless. It is known as Portland Race, and the angry, foaming surface of the sea here can be seen from a great distance. (Many years ago, when the *Britannia* was stationed at Portland, a favourite joke at the expense of "new fellows" was to volunteer the remark, "Beautiful day for the race, isn't it?" "What race?" inevitably inquired the greenhorn. "Portland Race, of course!")

Another danger is the shoal ground known as The Shambles, about three miles east-south-east of the Bill; here there are several banks, the depth of water being never anywhere less than eleven or twelve feet, so that there is nothing to warn the seaman of the precise position of the danger—I should rather say, there *was not* in those days any mark; for many years past there has been a lightship moored off The Shambles.

There is a passage some two miles in width between The Shambles and the Race, which is perfectly safe if you make due allowance for the strong tide; but the pilot on board the *Abergavenny* very wisely steered to pass to the eastward of the shoal, and the tide being then on the ebb, running to the westward, the Race was not an immediate danger, being formidable only on the flood-tide.

With the wind at west-south-west, nobody anticipated any difficulty, nor, indeed, should there have been any. The wind had moderated considerably, and, after taking the pilot, the anchors and cables were got ready and the jib-boom was got out.

The pilot, however, as it appears to me, must have been shaving The Shambles rather too closely. The lightship, round which any prudent navigator would nowadays direct his course under similar circumstances, is a good mile from the nearest shoal patch; and the tide, ebb and flood, runs pretty strongly over the shoals, so that, should the wind suddenly fail, a sailing ship that is making too free with the danger, with an ebb tide, would drift helplessly aground.

This is precisely what befell the unfortunate Indiaman. About five o'clock, when every one was thinking they would soon be safely at anchor in the Roads, only five or six miles distant, the wind dropped, the sails hung loose, banging about and slatting against the masts as the ship rolled in the heavy swell. Had the anchors been instantly let go, possibly she might have been brought up; this, however, was not done. The swell catching the ship on the quarter, threw her head to the northward, and almost instantly she took the ground.

Nobody foresaw at that moment the tragedy that was to follow. A breeze almost immediately springing up from north-west, all sail was made, in the hope of forcing the ship over the bank; a very feasible scheme, for the patches upon which such a vessel as the *Abergavenny* would ground are small, and somewhat scattered. The tide, however, kept forcing her on, while the sails and the swell sometimes prevailed, so she kept repeatedly striking and then getting clear. The wind rose again, and, crossing the tide, caused a heavy breaking sea; and when at length, soon after seven o'clock, the ship beat clear of the shoals, the bumping had so damaged her bottom that the pumps would not keep down the water.

It was then resolved to run for Weymouth Bay, some eight miles distant, and beach the ship on the sand. The coast of Portland, close at hand, is rocky and precipitous; I should have imagined that she could have been run on shore in Portland Roads with equal chances. However, this was not to be: the water poured into the hold, the wind shifted to the eastward, the waterlogged vessel refused to answer her helm; and the people on board realised that they were in imminent danger of losing their lives within a mile or two of the coast.

Minute-guns had been constantly fired after the ship first struck, and there were several coasting vessels near at hand. One of these sent a small boat and took off two ladies and four or five other passengers, promising to return for more; but the sea was heavy, and they found it all they could do to get back to their own vessel. The cutter was sent in, with the purser and third officer, to get assistance from the other ships;

but no effort appears to have been made to save any one in the other boats of the Indiaman—the captain and officers kept on hoping that they would get into Weymouth Bay before she went down, and in order to hoist out the boats the maintopsail must have been backed, and precious time lost.

All was in vain, however—in vain the crew toiled at the pumps and bailed at the hatchways; the vessel drifted helplessly about, sometimes the tide, sometimes the wind prevailing.

The officers worked with the men at the pumps, serving out a ration of spirits at intervals to sustain their strength and courage. The passengers, clustered on deck, and understanding, perhaps, but little of what was going on, hoped yet for deliverance. Boats could be heard near by, but no heed was paid to hails for assistance—probably the boatmen feared that the people would crowd in and swamp them. Some of the passengers and others, realising how desperate was the situation, left the ship, clinging to pieces of board, etc., and these may have been rescued by the boats.

By ten o'clock it was obvious that nothing could save the ship; the crew, wearied with their fruitless labour, and finding the ship absolutely full of water, desisted from pumping, and some attempted to raid the spirit room. But the officers, to their great credit, stuck manfully to their duties to the last; one of them stood at the spirit-room door, armed with a brace of pistols, and there he remained until the ship went down. A seaman approached, begging to be allowed some liquor: "It will be all one in another hour," he said, in excuse for his desire to get drunk. "Be that as it may," replied his officer, "let us die like men." And they did die like men, or survived to render heroic aid to the helpless.

Just before eleven o'clock, Mr. Baggot, the chief officer, came to Captain Wordsworth, who had all along preserved his presence of mind and calmness: "It is all over, sir—we can do no more—she must sink in a moment." "It can't be helped," replied the captain; "God's will be done."

A minute or two later, just after a heavy sea had struck her,

the ship sank, head first, in seventy feet of water. A considerable portion of the masts remained, of course, above water, and to these there clung some eighty or ninety people—many had been sucked under water when the ship went down, and rose no more.

The survivors, shivering and with difficulty holding on, could hear boats in the vicinity, but no help came for some time. One of the passengers, a young military officer, who had been below to get his commission and some money from his desk, describes how, just as he regained the deck, the ship took the fatal plunge. He was on the point of ascending the ladder to the poop, when, as he says, "The sea in an immense column traversed along the deck to where he stood." This was how it appeared to him—that the sea rose and engulfed the ship; a very vivid picture—one can easily imagine it. Instantly he was sucked down, with a heavy coat and boots on, and unable to swim; you would think it was all over with him. He came up again, however, and, when on the point of sinking once more, he felt something strike his hand. This was a loose rope hanging from the mizen-mast. In the darkness he could not see the mast or rigging, but in desperation he contrived, in spite of his heavy, soaking garments, to pull himself up the rope a little; then the ship lurched and bumped on the bottom, and flung him against the rigging, to which he clung, almost under water. He was quite exhausted, and would probably have let go shortly; but in the mizen-top, above him, was Mr. Gilpin, the fourth mate, who, not content with merely saving his own life, was on the lookout to render assistance to others. He got down to the young soldier, and by immense exertion dragged him into the top.

Mr. Gilpin, when the ship went down, was near Captain Wordsworth, and urged him to try to save himself; but the unhappy skipper appears to have had no desire to survive his ship, preferring to sink with her. He was not seen again.

At length, in the small hours of the morning, a coasting vessel, more bold than the rest, anchored near the wreck, sending her boat to bring off the people—in deadly apprehen-

sion, perhaps, of disaster from overcrowding. But they need not have feared—these men embarked singly, as they were told off by their officers, without any scramble or confusion. The business must have been a long one, for the sloop, a tiny vessel, could only take about twenty at a time, returning after each load had been landed ; but eventually the officers—Mr. Gilpin and some others—having seen every one else off, embarked and pulled towards the sloop. Suddenly there was a cry that a man was left behind, clinging as high as he could get upon one of the masts. The boat returned, and they hailed him—no reply ; so one of the officers ascended, found him speechless and almost inanimate, and carried him down on his back. He was a surgeon, and was so exhausted and benumbed that his life was despaired of for some time.

Out of a crew of 160, 50 or 60 passengers, about 150 soldiers, and some Chinese—400 persons in all—only about 100 were saved.

The other Indiamen got safely into Portland Roads. The *Abergavenny* was lost, we must suppose, from the incautiousness of her pilot and the unlucky failing of the wind. To me it appears strange that the other four Indiamen, with their numerous crews and good boats, should not have made some effort to save their consort's people. They were only some six miles off, and must, of course, have heard the minute guns ; but there is no mention of any boats arriving from them.

ADrift IN A "NORTHER"

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

IT was in the "sixties" of last century that H.M.S. *Tiger* was stationed, for six months or so, at Vera Cruz, in the Gulf of Mexico—a very uninteresting and undesirable part of the North America and West Indies station. Every captain who commanded a ship on that station hoped that he would escape the honour of being "Senior officer in the Gulf," and the captain of the *Tiger* had been very hopeful about it, believing that he was regarded with special favour by the admiral; who would therefore, he imagined, give him all the choicest cruising to do. The *Tiger*, however, was just the size of vessel always selected for this unpleasant duty, and so one fine day Captain Birch received the unwelcome news that he was to "proceed forthwith" to Vera Cruz, and assume the charge of "Her Majesty's ships and vessels" in the Gulf of Mexico—the "ships and vessels" consisting, besides his own ship, of one rather out-of-date gun-vessel.

Vera Cruz lies, as your atlas will tell you, near the southern extremity of the great sweep of coast-line of the Gulf; but your atlas will not tell you that, when a man-of-war goes to Vera Cruz, she does not lie off that city, but about three miles south of it; and the reason for this is, that the anchorage off the town is very much exposed, while the other is well protected, from all except northerly winds, by a series of coral reefs and islets, the best anchorage being inside the little island of Sacrificios: a very small coral island, with a few stunted shrubs upon it; you could walk round it in twenty minutes, and find nothing to reward you for that amount of exertion.

The officers of the *Tiger* found life very dull there. They could, of course, occasionally visit Vera Cruz, but there was no great fun to be had there: in those days it was a very unprosperous-looking place, the grass growing between the stones in many places, and the loathsome "John Crow" birds—a species of vulture—hopping about and picking at the garbage, or perching about the buildings. I do not know what it is like now—it is more than forty years since I was there.

There was nothing to do except gaze at the lines of coral reefs, with the white surf incessantly breaking heavily upon them, and try occasionally to shoot a pelican or a man-of-war bird—usually without success.

It was in October, after the *Tiger* had been there some three or four months, that a brilliant idea one day occurred to a midshipman—a little fellow, who, by reason of his small stature, had been humorously nicknamed "Chang," after a certain Chinese giant who was at that time exhibiting himself, the boy's real name being Wentworth.

"I say," he exclaimed, as they sat down to a very simple dinner in the midshipman's berth, "who'll come ashore and play cricket this afternoon?"

The proposition was greeted with a discouraging shout of derision.

"Cricket, you young ass!" said Bentley, the assistant-paymaster; "what are you going to play cricket on?"

"Sand, I suppose," said Chang, "with shells and lumps of coral to make a variety; but it's better than doing nothing."

By the time dinner was over, in spite of the ridicule with which the suggestion had been received, most of those present had come round to this view; and the first lieutenant, a big, jolly, good-natured fellow, granted the use of the jolly-boat for the purpose.

"Keep the boat on shore," he said, "and look out for the recall."

The jolly-boat was a staunch little craft, eighteen feet in length, with a crew of six men and a coxswain; one or two bluejackets who were fond of cricket were permitted to join

the party, and they pulled on shore to Sacrificios—a matter of little more than half a mile—in great spirits.

Bentley was of the party, and so also was Hardman, the senior sub-lieutenant; there were four midshipmen, and so, with the boat's crew and the other bluejackets, they made up a party of fifteen.

The game proved quite entertaining: it was not cricket of a high class, as the pitch consisted of very fine sand, interspersed with minute broken shells and fragments of coral, and it was so "slow" that when Bentley tried his "twisters"—I suppose they would now be termed "googlies"—the ball spun a little hole for itself, and made no further progress towards the wicket.

It was quite possible, moreover, to hit into the calm lagoon, or shallow sort of lake, inside the next coral reef—in which case it was ordained that the striker should field the ball himself. Various other rules were passed to meet the requirements of such a very unusual ground, and it was unanimously resolved, amid shouts of laughter, that "the club be called the Sacrificios Sand and Coral Cricket Club—S.S.C.C.C."

And so they played away right merrily: all the jolly-boat's crew joined in the game, the boat being quite safely secured to a small wooden pier, erected by the men of some former senior officer's ship. They played away, and nobody thought about the weather, nor did they notice the "general boats' recall," which was hoisted about half-past three by order of the first lieutenant.

To the experienced eye of this officer, who was an old "Gulf" hand, the weather merited more attention than the merry cricketers were disposed to bestow upon it. The sky had gradually changed to a dull lead-colour, and a breeze, rapidly freshening, had sprung up from the northward. He feared a "norther"—a violent gale prevalent in the winter months, sometimes blowing with hurricane force—and though it was full early in the year for this, he deemed it prudent to recall the boat; but nobody heeded his recall, and he saw with his glass that no "boat-keeper" had been left in the jolly-

boat—a serious piece of neglect subversive of his standing orders.

At half-past four, finding the wind increasing, with a very decided drop in the temperature—a characteristic of “northers”—he obtained the captain’s permission to fire a gun.

Then, indeed, the cricketers woke up.

“Hallo! General recall!” exclaimed Hardman. “Pull up the stumps, and double down to the boat; I believe it’s coming on to blow.”

It had, in a certain measure, already come on to blow, as they realised when they reached the landing-place. The half-mile of water which separated them from the ship was a mass of short, breaking seas, the white crests presenting a very angry appearance against the unusually dark-looking water, which was so clear and green in fine weather.

There was one merit, however, about this unlooked-for breeze—it blew just at right angles with the direction of their course to the ship; and the jolly-boat was supplied with an efficient suit of sails. Pulling off with the oars would be a tedious and unpleasant business, but under sail it should only take a very few minutes.

“It’s a soldier’s wind, sir,” said Joseph Peters, a big, handsome petty officer, one of the most efficient men in the ship. “She’ll run across in no time with a reef in the mainsail.”

The jolly-boat was rigged with what is termed a “spreet” mainsail—pronounced “sprit”—and a jib; and you should pay particular attention to this.

“Get the mast up,” said Hardman, “and stand by to set the mainsail without the spreet.”

Joe Peters highly disapproved of this proceeding, but he hesitated about saying so to his superior; however, he determined to risk a snub, rather than the more serious contingency of drifting to leeward and missing the ship.

“Beg pardon, sir, but she’ll go much better with the spreet in and a reef down; she’ll sag to leeward without it.”

Hardman saw the point at once, but he had not the good sense and generosity to own the man’s superior seamanship.

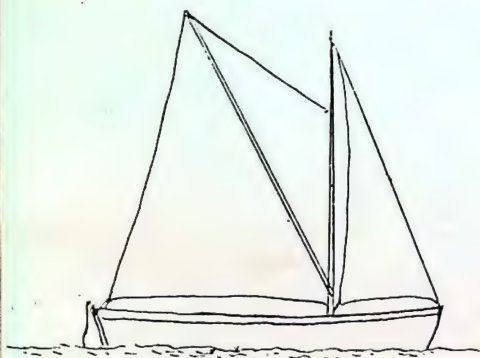
"Oh, she'll go all right without it," he said. "Let them do as I tell them."

Peters accepted his snub with due respect and submission, but he made some of the men fill the four small water-casks—termed "baricoes" officially, but always "breakers" in practice—with which the boat was supplied, to act as ballast.

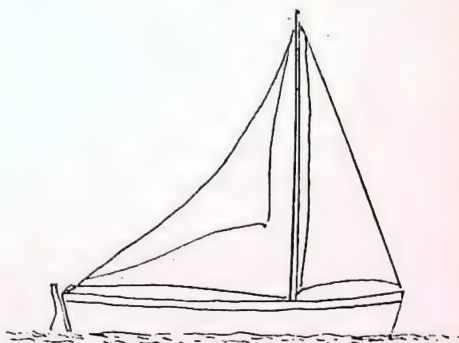
In a few minutes all was ready.

"Sit down in the bottom of the boat," said Hardman, taking the tiller himself; "hoist the jib—let go, forward."

A very few minutes served to prove the justice of Peters's remarks; and in order to make this clear, I have made two



THE PROPER WAY TO DO IT.



THE WAY NOT TO DO IT.

little sketches—one showing the sail properly set, with a reef in, the other with the spreet out. It will be seen at once that, in the first instance, the sail is set flat, as it is intended to be, while in the other it is a sort of three-cornered jelly-bag arrangement, suitable only for sailing before the wind—and very poor at that. The long, thin spar, running diagonally across the sail, is of course the spreet, the point of which is held in a loop at the head of the sail.

The staunch little jolly-boat, had she been given fair play, would have made very short work of that narrow strip of angry looking water, breasting the short, breaking seas with only an occasional wash of spray over her weather-bow, and

with absolute safety for all her passengers. Every one who has had any experience with boats knows that, under such conditions, with a beam wind, a much smaller boat than this would make the trip without risk.

With this queer jelly-bag of a sail, however, the poor little jolly-boat did not know what to make of it; all Hardman's attention to the helm could not make her look up to windward. She moved sluggishly, chopping at the seas, her bow constantly falling off from the wind, and before she had covered half the distance it became obvious that she was not going to fetch the ship.

There is always a surface current setting with the wind during a "norther," and this was already commencing, which of course did not tend to improve matters.

Peters, sitting up against the weather side of the boat, and glancing with practised eye from the ship to the sails, thoroughly comprehended the seriousness of the situation, and wondered what his officer was going to do next; he did not feel disposed to offer any more advice.

"Get out the lee oars," said Hardman, and he was immediately obeyed; but it was an almost useless expedient. The three men were baffled by the sail, and by the heel of the boat, and could do but little to keep her head up.

Hardman now realised the folly of his orders; the boat was drifting hopelessly to leeward, and still he held on to the tiller, keeping it almost hard over, in the vain hope of getting there somehow.

"They're veering a breaker astern, sir," said Peters.

This was true; the captain had come on deck just as the boat left the shore, and, instantly realising the faulty seamanship displayed, had expressed himself strongly.

"She'll never fetch like that! Veer a breaker astern on the grass-line. Who's the fool in charge of her?"

"Mr. Hardman's steering, sir," said the first lieutenant, with his glass on the boat, after giving the necessary orders.

The breaker, attached to a "grass"-line—that is, a rope composed of light fibre, which floats on the surface—went

bobbing astern on the short seas, and those in the jolly-boat had only to catch hold of it and be hauled up safely alongside. A buoy thus veered astern of a vessel at anchor moves, however, with great deliberation, unless it be in a regular tideway, while a boat drifts with distressing alacrity.

Peters, without waiting for orders, took up the boat-hook and went to the bow, signing to the coxswain of the jolly-boat, a smart young seaman, to accompany him.

"Now, Jimmy," he said, in a low voice, "this is touch and go; I'll catch the line with the boat-hook, and you'll tail on to it, and get the bight under the thwart, if you can, or hang on somehow until I can get hold too——"

The boat was by this time nearly astern of the ship; but she was drifting so rapidly that it became apparent that she would only just fetch the bobbing breaker—and would she do that?

"Stand by to catch hold forward!" cried Hardman; "down jib! Pull hard, those lee oars!"

The boat's bow just touched the breaker.

"Get the painter under the grass-line!" said Peters, making a dab with his boat-hook, and holding on like a giant, half his body over the bow. The coxswain, already realising that this was the only chance, had the end of the boat's painter in his hand, and leaning over endeavoured to pass it round the line, Peters meanwhile having the whole strain of the boat on the boat-hook. Another man jumped forward and backed him up, while the coxswain struggled to get the painter under the buoy, stretching perilously far over the gunwale in his endeavour.

He had just contrived to pass it, and was in the act of recovering himself, when the breaker suddenly receded; there was a shout from Peters, as he and his assistant tumbled backwards:

"Hold on, Jimmy!"

Jimmy held on—only too well. In his insecure position, a very slight pull was sufficient to dislodge him, and the sudden strain on the painter did it. He disappeared over the bow, still grasping the end of the painter for a moment or two; then

the boat was whirled away by the wind and current—the head of the boat-hook had parted from the staff.

“Down mast! Out oars! Quick!” cried Hardman; and in a moment or two the sail and mast were down, and six young fellows at the oars. But of what use was it? They could certainly not stem the freshening wind under oars—and where was the coxswain?

Peters had shouted to him to swim down towards the boat—perhaps he tried—but they saw no more of him, and they did not waste much breath over conjectural explanation. Jimmy was a fine swimmer; but the finest swimmer has no chance. Well, it was Jimmy himself who had two cod-lines broken by sharks when he was fishing a day or two previously—there could be but little doubt as to his fate.

And what was in store for these others! The boat was being hurried to leeward, the oars not sufficing even to keep her head on to the wind, for she was broad in proportion to her length, and not adapted for speed.

The south end of the islet was already passed, the swell rolling in round it and bursting with great violence on the mainland shore; to beach the boat there would be extremely dangerous.

“Is the anchor in the boat?” asked Hardman.

“Yes, sir; but there’s no cable.”

They might have anchored under the lee of the island, and perhaps held on until morning—but no cable! It was neatly coiled away in the boatswain’s store-room.

“Get the mast up,” said Hardman, “and reef the mainsail; we must keep her under sail for the night.”

In due course the reefed sail was set. Dusk was setting in prematurely under the lowering sky, and the sea was rapidly rising; but there seemed to be no alternative to this desperate expedient. There was no haven down the coast for which they could steer, even had there been daylight; there were dangerous reefs some eight or nine miles to the southward, towards which the boat was rapidly drifting. And so commenced that long and miserable night.

The gale was not, certainly, a typical "norther"—had it blown as it does in December and January, the jolly-boat could not have lived in it—but it was quite bad enough. When darkness set in—black, inky darkness it was, too—the phosphorescent crests of the big seas glimmered ominously as they towered over the little boat, and constantly it appeared as though she must be overwhelmed; but it is marvellous what a boat will stand, under snug sail, and kept as close as possible to the wind.

For some hours the jolly-boat made fine weather of it, though she shipped enough water to render pretty constant bailing necessary.

Hardman, whatever he may have lacked in seamanlike qualifications, now showed that he had, at any rate, a full share of that quiet courage which rises superior to peril. For hours he held the tiller, displaying some skill and adroitness in dodging the heavy crests; then he yielded it to Peters, and sat down in the wet stern-sheets, talking cheerfully to the youngsters, encouraging the men, discussing where the ship would pick them up in the morning—never for a moment displaying the least fear or disquietude. He took off his coat, and wrapped it round little "Chang," who was not a very robust lad, and was shivering with cold and apprehension—the temperature having by this time dropped many degrees.

Bentley nobly seconded his executive brother-officer's example, and the bearing of these two plucky young men was invaluable in maintaining the courage of the others.

The hours dragged on wearily, and the strain, mental and physical, was bound to tell heavily upon some of them. Only those who have experienced the horrors of such a night can fully comprehend the situation: and these would be the last to blame or ridicule some indications of fear, despair, or what not; it is not every man or boy who is so constituted as to be unassailable under such circumstances. So slowly did the time pass, that when one of the midshipmen contrived to strike a solitary match inside his wet jacket, believing that it must be near dawn, and obtained a momentary glimpse of his watch,

it only showed ten o'clock! Bentley, who sat next him, nudged him vigorously. "Keep quiet!" he whispered—and the lad obeyed him.

But now it became evident that the danger was increasing: the seas became every half-hour more formidable, and now and then there came a giant, like two rolled into one, until at length, in spite of Peters's skilful steering, the boat shipped such a quantity of water that it was only by frantic bailing with caps, etc., that she was saved.

"She won't stand many like that, sir," said Peters; "shall I try and rig a sea-anchor?"

"Yes, do," said Hardman, taking the tiller; "but don't use the sails."

"No, sir—no; I understand," said the burly Peters; and then he roused up the jolly-boat's crew. One or two of them were overcome by fear after the big sea, and lay moaning in the bottom of the boat. Peters displayed no anger towards them.

"Now, my sonnies, show a leg here," he said, "and lend a hand to rig a sea-anchor—she'll ride like a duck to that."

Three or four responded instantly, others had reached that condition of mind to which even good men are sometimes liable under the grip of overwhelming odds—a passive shrinking from exertion, a tendency to lie down and wait until it is over.

However, there were enough—more, in fact, than could easily work together in the limited space, hampered by the sail, etc. Their task was an impossible one, save to such a type as Peters of the British bluejacket. To him, nothing was impossible; he was as strong as two ordinary men, and more knowledgeable than most.

Rummaging in the little locker under the stern-sheets, he found a few pieces of "rounding"—*i.e.* half-worn rope; and this he divided into strands to lash the oars together into a long kind of faggot. The four breakers were then secured to them, at equal intervals, and the boat's awning, of canvas, with three or four wooden battens to spread it, was attached; finally,

Peters secured to the centre of this curious bundle the anchor, and the two iron awning stanchions, hanging a foot or two below.

The immense difficulty of this business, under the circumstances, can only be appreciated by a seaman. It was pitch dark, the boat labouring in the sea, the mainsail constantly in the way; and more than once they were compelled to desist and bail for dear life. However, it was eventually accomplished—a make-shift, indeed, for to construct a really good sea-anchor the mast and sails should be utilised, but these could not be spared in view of present safety and future contingencies.

Peters was hard put to it to find rope of any sort by which the boat could ride to the sea-anchor; by knotting together all the odd bits he could find, and cutting off the spare ends of the sheet and halliards of the sail, he contrived a "span"—that is, he hitched his sorry-looking, patched-up rope near either end of the bundle of oars, etc., and to the centre of this he attached the boat's painter.

"All ready, sir!" he shouted to Hardman; "one or two of you chaps stand by to douse the sails. Come, wake up, sonny! Do you want to lose the number of your mess?"

Peters cast off the lee shroud, in order to heave out his queer raffle clear; the jib was lowered, and the sea-anchor tipped over the lee side of the boat.

The effect was immediate: the boat came up head to wind, the fluttering mainsail was promptly lowered, the mast got down, and the desperate crew watched breathlessly for further developments.

The device answered marvellously well: the breakers, anchor, and awning stanchions gave it stability, the oars kept all afloat, and the canvas awning, spread out on the surface, broke the force of the crests as they rose ahead of the boat.

"Told you she'd ride like a duck," said Peters; and he kept to himself the by no means unfounded fear that the very inadequate lashings, etc., would give way before the night was out.

Though matters were much improved, and the risk of foundering greatly reduced, by this expedient, their situation was still most perilous. The boat was a mere cockle-shell in such a sea, and still required constant bailing. The wind was—in comparison with the tropical temperature to which for months past they had been accustomed—bitterly cold, and they were drenched to the skin, their teeth chattering sometimes uncontrollably. How many hours of darkness they had yet to endure they had no idea—nor would daylight necessarily bring relief. A “norther” frequently lasts a couple of days, and Hardman, aware of the dangerous reefs down the coast, had kept the boat on the port tack, standing out from the land. The ship might well search many hours for such a speck as the jolly-boat, without success.

Still, they longed for the dawn, which would not come, so it seemed; and the long and cruel exposure told heavily upon some. Poor young Wentworth became delirious, complaining in his ravings of constant pain in his back, where, he said, the sharks had got him. Bentley added his own wet coat to Hardman’s, and held the lad closely to him for hours together, trying to get some warmth into him. The other midshipmen were strong, healthy, young fellows, and took their cue from the behaviour of their seniors, never uttering a murmur of complaint.

Among the bluejackets there was not lacking some bitter animadversion upon Hardman’s error at starting, which had, in truth, caused the mishap, and the loss of the coxswain’s life—how much more? they asked, as the long dark night dragged on, and the tireless and continuous succession of drenching crests assailed the boat, until the chill of their soaking clothing was almost more than could be endured, and their lips and eyes were sore with the clinging salt.

When the dense darkness commenced at length to yield to grey in the east, the prospect at first appeared more dismal than before. The awful, dreary, menacing waste of angry ocean denied all hope of succour; the huge seas, towering up ahead, threatened every moment to swamp the boat: the

danger was enhanced in their minds as it became more distinctly visible, and they marvelled how she had survived through the night.

As the light broadened, anxious eyes scanned the horizon on all hands; but there was not a sail, not a stick in sight, no welcome wreath of smoke, and no land—nothing but the grey, heaving, breaking seas, running in huge furrows, always running, always breaking, cold and pitiless.

Bentley, still holding the sick lad in his arms, sat in the bottom of the boat, against the seat; Hardman stood beside him, looking round; and Peters, strong, watchful, and full of resource, looked aft, ready to execute any orders he might receive—more than ready, for, generous and manly himself, and plucky in an unusual degree, he had "sized up" his officer during these hours of trial, and his error in seamanship was forgotten in admiration of other qualifications.

All did not share this view, however; and when Peters, looking round with undaunted mien, said: "Well, here's daylight, boys, anyway—wonder when we'll sight the old ship?" one of the men who had been the first to show signs of despair broke in angrily: "Daylight! Yes, and a blessed lot o' good daylight's going to do us! Where's the blessed ship? Where's the land?"

"Oh! cut her adrift," said another, shivering; "what's the use o' hanging on here? May as well let the sharks have us now—same as they got Jimmy!"

Hardman spoke:

"Come, don't give in yet, men; we have got through the night, and there are many hours of daylight before us now——"

"Yes, and it was you that got us here," said the first speaker, truculently; "if it hadn't been for you, we'd be snug on board now, poor Jimmy Crowther and all."

Peters could stand no more of this.

"What?" he shouted; "you miserable, skulking lubber! You and that other chap have no more pluck than a blessed crawling cockroach; and you'll up and cheek your officer, will

you? He's a man, is Mr. Hardman—and you're not fit to clean his old sea-boots! D'ye hear that? What are you, then? Are you men, or are you blessed crawlers—or what do you call yourselves?"

"You dry up, Joe Peters," said one of them, "or we'll sling you to the sharks first."

"You'll sling me!" shouted Peters, leaning forward, one great brawny hand on the gunwale, the other clenched on his knee. "How many of you? and what should I be doing? Come and try it, then!"

He looked far too formidable for either of the malcontents to respond to this invitation; and Hardman, his nerves steadied and his resources developed by his responsibility and self-control, took advantage of the moment to intervene. Placing his hand on Peters's shoulder, he said, in a low voice:

"Thank you, Peters, I won't forget that; but it's no use having a row—let me talk to them. Now, men," he continued, raising his voice and holding up his hand to command attention, "listen to me for a minute. It's very true that some or all of us may be very near death at this moment—and some of you are saying that it's my fault; well, if so, you are not half as sorry for it as I am. If I'm in fault, I'll answer for it to the captain; now it's my duty to do all I can to save our lives—and let me remind you, that no one is likely to save his life, or prolong it for one minute, by getting at loggerheads with his shipmates or his officers. What we have got to do is to face it out like men, and pull together. Do you think we shall die any the happier, if we die quarrelling? Have you forgotten the many yarns—yes, and true yarns, too—of how British bluejackets have faced certain death with smiling faces—with *three cheers*? And are we going to lose a chance of following their example? No one may come to know of it, perhaps—but *we* shall know of it, anyhow. We don't want to die—we'll save our lives if we can—we have done our best so far, and I for one don't give up hope for a moment; but if we have to die, my lads, let us die like men, respecting each other——"

He paused, for the long trying hours of suspense and suffering had told upon him more than he imagined, and he found his voice scarcely under control. But there was no need for another word—his speech had gone home to the brave and faint-hearted alike.

"That's the talk!" cried Peters; "and we'll stand by you, sir, as long as there's a bit o' life left in us!"

The first and most outspoken malcontent came aft, cap in hand:

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said humbly—and the other followed.

It was a curious little scene—very tragic, very dramatic, enacted within the compass of eighteen feet by five, with the grey, lowering sky, the howling wind, and the great chasing seas for an audience.

"And now I believe the wind's going down," said Hardman; "it's no use hanging about here for the ship; she may find us, but we can't afford to chance it; the land can't be far away, to port——"

"There it is, sir?" cried one of the men; and sure enough, away to the westward, was the outline of land, quite distinct.

But they had to get there—and they had to land, possibly a more risky business than all. However, they were not daunted by these considerations: there was daylight, and there was land, and the wind seemed to be going down. Hardman spoke decisively.

"Peters, you'll steer her in. Stand by to cut the painter—up mast, and set the mainsail flat; don't hoist the jib until I tell you."

"We must leave the sea-anchor behind, sir, I'm afraid," said Peters.

"Yes, can't be helped."

In a few minutes the mainsail was set and held amidships by the steady-lines, used for the slings when the boat is hoisted.

"Stand by, forward!" cried Hardman; "hoist the jib—haul aft the starboard jib-sheet—cut away!"

"All gone, sir!"

"Let draw jib and mainsail!"

It was well done; the jolly-boat slid away, climbing the slope of a big sea and slipping through the crest cleverly. There was a master-hand at the helm, for Peters came of fisherman stock, and had handled boats under sail since he was ten years of age.

Their spirits rose as they made way landward, though some had decided misgivings as to what they would do when they got there.

Wentworth was now lying across the knees of one of his messmates: his face was flushed, and his breathing short and painful—the exposure had produced a very rapid development of pneumonia, as it will do occasionally; he took no notice of any one, only moaning and stirring uneasily.

What was that? A sort of bump in the air, almost stifled by the breeze.

"There's a gun, sir!" said one of the men. The boat rose on a sea. "There's the ship, sir, on the starboard quarter!"

An hour or two later, after a somewhat risky process, they were all safe on board, and Chang was up to his chin in linseed poultices.

A hearty lunch, and the officers and men turned in, with sore faces, and completely overcome with sleep, to recuperate.

Before they came alongside the ship, however, Peters had, after consultation with Hardman, said a word to the men:

"I say, chaps, we're not, none of us, going to say anything to anybody, 'cept that we was just brothers all this trip—are we?"

The hint was enough, and so the little episode of the morning watch was forgotten.

The captain sent for Hardman to his cabin on the following morning.

"Well, Mr. Hardman, you made rather a mess of it in the jolly-boat. You should never try to sail a boat like that——"

"No, sir, I'm very sorry—very sorry indeed; it was entirely my fault, I admit."

"Yes—well, I sent for you to give you a bit of a wiggling about it, but Bentley was with me just now, and he told me what you couldn't well have told me yourself—of your splendid example to the men, and the way you talked to them—and instead of jawing about seamanship, I prefer to thank you, and shake hands with you"—which he did.

"Thank you, sir!" said Hardman, feeling rather overcome by the skipper's words, as they shook hands; "and since Mr. Bentley has been talking about me, I should like to tell you about him, and the fine example he set—I believe he saved young Wentworth's life, and he never thought of himself for a moment."

"Well done!—I'm glad to hear it; these things bring out the best part of a man, if he is a man at all. Good seamanship's a precious fine thing, but it's not everything, Hardman—not everything; I shall forget the poor seamanship, and remember the other part."

And I think we may follow the skipper's example.

THE ECCENTRICITIES OF CAPTAIN BOB GILROY, R.N.

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

YOU must not draw the obvious conclusion, from the title of this yarn, that Captain Gilroy's Christian name was Robert; as a matter of fact, it was Reginald—Reginald Hastings, to be accurate; but he had always been known in the service as "Bob," for the simple reason that he had very light-coloured hair. This may appear to be an insufficient cause for such a radical alteration, and, indeed, I am not trying to justify it; I can only record the fact that very light-haired individuals, officers or seamen, in the navy, were invariably, in my time, styled "white-headed Bob," and usually simply "Bob," for short. In like manner a tall, thin man was "Jerry," a pockmarked man "Rough," and one of unusually old appearance "Ninety."

Bob Gilroy had been a long while upon half-pay when he was appointed to the *Jaguar*; no one, in fact, expected that he would go afloat again, and possibly this appointment was a bit of a surprise to Bob himself. He had married a lady with a good deal of money, and had been peacefully living on a nice little estate in Hampshire for nearly five years, when "their lordships" informed him that he was forthwith to repair on board Her Majesty's ship *Jaguar*, and take command of the said ship; "willing and requiring all your subordinates to be obedient unto you, their said captain"—and so on—and it may here conveniently be stated that the date of the appointment was early in the year 1865.

Bob Gilroy was something of a celebrity in the service, by

reason of his very unusual physical strength and pugilistic proclivities. He was credited, in his younger days, with being the strongest man and the best boxer in the navy, and many stories were told of his doughty deeds—not always very creditable. Even at the time of his unexpected appointment to the *Jaguar*, when he was over fifty years of age, and his hair had acquired another sort of whiteness, he was a very formidable individual—not very much above the average height, but with a chest measurement of some six-and-forty inches, and an arm as big as an ordinary man's leg. In appearance and disposition he was a genial, good-tempered, rather good-looking John Bull sort of type, with a considerable love of ease and comfort, which his long residence on shore had, of course, tended to emphasise; so when he obediently repaired on board the *Jaguar*, fitting out in Woolwich dock-yard, and found the ship in a great muddle, he left the first lieutenant to complete the preparations for sea, only running down two or three times a week to see how things were going on.

The first lieutenant and everybody else had, indeed, a most unpleasant time, for the weather was bitterly cold, with occasional snow-storms; the men and officers were mostly strangers to each other, the ship was filthy dirty, the dock-yard workmen behind time—discomfort reigned supreme, and tempers were exceedingly short in consequence.

However, this state of affairs naturally had an ending, and everybody was immensely relieved when Bob Gilroy, coming from the commodore's office with his sword under his arm, gave the welcome order to cast off the hawsers. Bob had come on board the evening before in a particularly good temper, for the cabman who brought him from the station, misled by his genial air, had been very truculent about his fare, and went so far as to jump down from his perch and "square up" to the redoubtable Bob—result, after one round, cabbie being assisted to his feet by a policeman, while Bob walked off, chucking him half a sovereign as balm for his bruises; so cabbie got more than he asked for in two senses!

Before many days had passed, the *Jaguar* had left the frost and snow of dear old England far astern; and then the crew commenced to discover that they had shipped with a very uncommon sort of skipper.

Bob Gilroy was, in fact, about one hundred years behind the times in his notions of discipline, and so forth. The *Jaguar* was what was known in those days as a corvette—a vessel of very moderate size, carrying all her guns on the upper deck; she was, of course, a steamer, but was supposed to perform her voyages as much as possible under sail; and after she got into the trade winds—being bound for Port Royal, Jamaica—the skipper ordained that the crew should be exercised daily in handling the sails and spars, reefing topsails, and all the rest of it.

This exercise was entirely conducted by the first lieutenant, in accordance with the custom of the service; Bob Gilroy strutting up and down the bridge, itching to put his oar in—a remarkable figure, clad in white flannel trousers, a short jacket, and a broad-brimmed white felt hat, with a blue ribbon bearing the ship's name, while under his arm he carried a huge spy-glass, intended for use on a stand.

Occasionally, when something went wrong, he could no longer forbear—"Disgraceful! disgraceful, you foretopmen! I'll flog every man of you if you don't beat the main next time!" Another time it would be the maintopmen who were in disgrace: "Maintop there! my old grandmother could do better than that! I'll flog the last man down off the topsail yard!" and so on. Such things have, of course, been done in times long past; but even in the sixties of last century these customs were as dead as Julius Cæsar, and every one was well aware that Bob Gilroy could not fulfil his threats, which became in time a source of amusement—carefully concealed, however, from the skipper; Bob was not the sort of man you would care to laugh at to his face.

One evening, at drill, he fell foul of the midshipman of the foretop—a quiet youngster, zealous enough as to his duties, and possessed of a considerable sense of humour—by name

Stevens. The foretopmen had not shifted their topsail with sufficient alacrity; young Stevens was not in fault, indeed, all had done their best, but, as every seaman is aware, things sometimes go crooked, without any one being really to blame. Bob, however, was determined, as the saying goes, to "have somebody's blood," and when the new sail was at length hoisted, the ropes coiled down, and the crew "fallen in," awaiting the next order, his clear, somewhat high-pitched voice broke the silence:

"Foretop there! Mr. Stevens! come down, sir!"

Down came Stevens with his accustomed agility, and, running aft, saluted his captain, standing in front of the bridge, the whole ship's company more or less on the broad grin—for you may grin at a midshipman's discomfiture, though you must not laugh at the skipper.

"Look here, youngster," said Bob, his huge spy-glass tucked under his arm, his hands in his trousers pockets, "I'm sorry to have to bring you up before all hands, but if you don't do your duty in the foretop, I'll disrate you."

"Very good, sir!" said Stevens, who was by no means unduly scared.

"It's not very good, sir! Go aloft again, and do your duty properly!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Stevens, saluting, and turning to go forward.

"And if you don't double along the deck, I'll disrate you!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" said the lad, turning again to salute, and breaking into a run.

"And if you don't move up the fore-rigging, I'll disrate you!" yelled Gilroy, working himself up, somewhat nettled by the midshipman's coolness.

Stevens did not wait to salute this time, having nearly arrived at the foremast; but as he sprang into the rigging, a sudden pang assailed him. He was wearing white duck trousers, without braces, and therefore entirely dependent upon the buttons for maintaining their correct position. Now, the buttons of midshipmen's trousers in those days,

at least, were more or less evanescent, flying off and disappearing in the most remarkable manner, and the top button of young Stevens' garments had, in fact, parted company earlier in the day. As he made his cat-like spring into the rigging, the second, unequal to its new responsibilities, followed suit, and he recollected that the third was hanging by a thread.

Pausing a moment, he gave his trousers a vigorous hitch up, and then commenced to run aloft—he was somewhat vain of his prowess in this respect, and, indeed, no topman could catch him; but, alas! he had not traversed three ratlines, when the third button parted, and he felt his trousers slipping down over his hips.

By this time, the foretopmen, close by, had become aware of the state of affairs, and were, of course, highly amused; when young Stevens paused again for the hitching process, they gurgled audibly, and Bob Gilroy, from the bridge, shouted:

“Move more smartly, sir, or I'll disrate you!”

Stevens, choking with laughter, endeavoured to obey; but the case was hopeless—the recalcitrant garment, no longer amenable to any hitching, slipped down and hampered his limbs.

“What do you mean, sir, by laughing when I hail you?” bawled Gilroy, still failing to comprehend the situation.

Stevens composed his features, but he had no command over his trousers; so, holding them up with one hand, he slowly mounted with the other, amid an increasing titter, in which the men on the quarter-deck commenced to join.

“What the mischief are they all grinning at?” exclaimed Gilroy angrily, turning to the first lieutenant, whose broad shoulders were now shaking with merriment.

“His breeches are coming down, sir,” he said; and then the whole ship's company burst into a roar of laughter, in which Bob Gilroy incontinently joined, as Stevens sedately made his way through “lubber's hole” into the top—for you cannot get over the “futtock shrouds” with one hand—and was presently seen applying a “soul-and-body-lashing,” as

Jack terms it, in the form of a stout rope-yarn about his waist.

"Young rascal!" said Gilroy, showing his white teeth; "hands reef topsails!"

When drill was over, he sent for Stevens.

"Look here, youngster—never mind what I said just now—come and dine with me at seven o'clock."

Bob's bark was always far worse than his bite.

It was later on, however, when the ship was approaching that string of beautiful islands known as the Windward Islands, that he distinguished himself in the most flagrant manner. Among other old-fashioned notions, Bob was always on the lookout for pirates and slavers, though the former had long been extinct in the North Atlantic, and the slave trade to Cuba was certainly not a flourishing concern at that time. However, he gave standing orders that he was to be called, at any hour of the day or night, when a sail was reported.

It was a beautiful morning, the sweet trade wind blowing cool and strong, and the *Jaguar* under all sail, with the screw hoisted up, was bowling along merrily, making ten or eleven knots. The watch was engaged in scrubbing the deck, and the lookout-man had been ordered up to the foretop mast-head. Scarcely had he taken his seat on the crosstrees, when he hailed the deck:

"A sail right ahead, sir!"

Lieutenant Morton, officer of the watch, promptly descended to the cabin:

"Captain Gilroy—there's a sail reported, right ahead, sir."

"Eh?—can you see her from deck? What do you make of her?" asked Bob, sitting up in his swinging cot.

"Not yet, sir—only from aloft."

"Have you got all the sail on she'll carry?"

"Everything, sir—starboard lower stunsail—she's doing a good ten-and-a-half."

"Very good—I'll be on deck in a minute."

Up he came, with the huge telescope, which he rested on the brass rail of the bridge, directing it to the horizon ahead;

and presently up came the sun, with tropical swiftness, on the starboard quarter, and a glistening speck was immediately discernible ahead.

"There she is, by Jove!" said the skipper, trying to catch her with his glass, which was no easy matter, for the ship was rolling and pitching considerably. The crowd of bluejackets, on their knees, scrubbing the quarter-deck, looked up suddenly, revealing a mass of tanned faces in lieu of blue caps, then went on steadily scrubbing.

"Tell the first lieutenant to get the screw down immediately after breakfast," said Gilroy; "send for the chief engineer."

Soon afterwards the telescopic funnel commenced to rise slowly, a thin blue wreath of smoke already issuing from it; and in due course the pipe went, "Hands down screw!"

This was thoroughly unorthodox, as was known to every soul on board—to get up steam with a strong trade wind on the quarter was an unheard-of thing; however, the skipper's orders were, of course, obeyed without question, and by nine o'clock the *Jaguar* was reeling off thirteen under steam and sail, and presently did a good knot better.

There was a good deal of quiet merriment among the officers; but a little excitement is always welcome at sea, and a chase has attractions under any circumstances. A sweepstake was got up for the time at which they would be alongside the stranger, which was evidently no sluggard, for she took a lot of catching.

"She's a brig," said Gilroy, after a lengthened scrutiny; "smart sailer, too—one of the Cuban slavers, most likely."

No one, of course, questioned the skipper's opinion, and there could be no doubt about the sailing qualities of the chase, which must have been doing pretty nearly thirteen knots.

About noon the islands were sighted—first a little purple dot or two, changing to green as the ship rapidly approached, like emeralds set in a sea of sapphire. If you look at your map of the West Indies, you will see that there is a wide passage between Guadaloupe, the largest of the group, and

Montserrat, and for this passage the brig was evidently steering, passing Antigua to the southward; you will also see that this is all on the road either to Jamaica or Cuba.

The hull of the brig was now plainly visible from deck, and through a glass it could be seen that she was a smart-looking craft, and flying rather light, which would account for her great speed before the wind.

Quickly the islands rose; Antigua was passed, and the peak of Montserrat was on the starboard bow.

"By Jove, she's a flyer!" said Gilroy; "she shows no colours yet."

"Shall we hoist ours, sir?" asked the officer of the watch.

"No—wait a bit," said Gilroy, who was debating whether he should not have recourse to strategy, and hoist American colours first.

Nearer came the islands, and nearer came the brig—the white foam thrown off from her bows could now plainly be seen—and as the island of Montserrat came abeam, the *Jaguar* was only a mile or so astern of her.

"Have an armed boat's crew ready," said Gilroy, "in case he shows fight—and load a gun with blank cartridge."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said the first lieutenant; and in a minute or two a boat's crew, armed with pistols and cutlasses, was ready, and the lee cutter cleared away.

"She's English built, sir," said the master, his glass to his eye; "she has her name on her stern, but I can't read it."

"Very likely; these slaver fellows will often buy a fast English brig—suits them very well."

The man-of-war was now getting close on the lee quarter of the brig, and the west side of the island came into view, with its green slopes of sugar cane—for they made sugar on Montserrat in those days, not lime-juice cordial.

And then an unexpected thing happened: the brig, taking in her royals and studding-sails, braced her yards forward, and hauled up round the island. This did not look like

being bound for Cuba; but Bob Gilroy was not going to change his mind in a hurry.

"She's hauling up!" he exclaimed; "turn the hands up, shorten and trim sail!"

"Aye, aye, sir! Clear lower deck! Hands shorten and trim sail! Royal clewlines, lower stun' sail tripping line, topmast and topgallant sturn' sail downhauls!"

The men came tumbling up, the prevailing impression being that there must be a man overboard. The light sails were handed in no time. "Lee braces!" roared the first lieutenant—and in another minute the two vessels were racing along in the smooth water under the lee of the island, the wind coming in uncertain puffs and squalls. The brig lay over at a sharp angle, tearing through the green water—for it was not too deep so close inshore.

The *Jaguar's* steam quickly brought her up on the brig's beam.

"Fire the gun!" cried the skipper; and the stranger in reply hoisted English colours, but made no attempt to shorten sail.

"Hoist our colours!" said Gilroy, with the lust of the chase hot upon him. "Confound the fellow, why doesn't he heave-to? Load with shot! Keep her up—further in shore!"

"We shall risk getting aground, sir," said the master; "we draw more water than she does."

"Hang the risk! Do as I tell you!" cried Gilroy. "Fire a shot across her bows!"

Bang! went the gun again, and the shot splashed ahead of the brig—unpleasantly close.

This produced an immediate result—the brig hauled up her mainsail, and backed her mainyard.

"Stop the engines, and heave-to," said Gilroy. "Man the cutter. Mr. Morton, you will go on board, and request to see her papers, and have the hatches taken off—and take care he doesn't fool you in some way—they're smart beggars. Confound him, our boat will never catch him while he forges ahead like that. Brig, ahoy! Haul your foresail up!"

No notice was taken of his hail.



From a drawing by J. Fraser.

THE ECCENTRICITIES OF CAPTAIN BOB GILROY, R.N.
"Pick off the man at the helm!"



"Send the best shot in the marines here, with ball cartridge."

There appeared to be absolute unanimity of opinion concerning the identity of this individual, for there was an immediate cry for "Jorkins!"

Jorkins, a veteran sea-soldier of grim aspect, came along with his rifle, and was supplied with ball cartridge by the imperturbable sergeant.

"Pick off the man at the helm!" said Gilroy.

Jorkins could very likely have made a good bid for it, but he contented himself with sending a bullet whistling close to the man's head. The foresail was immediately hauled up.

"Ah! that's woke him up," said Gilroy; "shove off, Mr. Morton—and mind what I told you."

Lieutenant Morton, feeling rather like a fool, shoved off accordingly. As he approached the brig, he saw, in plain letters on her stem, the name "*Polly—Cardiff*"; and the thoroughly British aspect of the bluff skipper and his crew, regarding him over the quarter, was quite in keeping with the name.

Rowing alongside, Morton stepped on board. The skipper was smoking a short clay pipe, and regarded the officer with an unfriendly, not to say defiant eye.

"Your old man gone off his chump?" he asked.

"Not at all," said the lieutenant cheerfully; "he requests that you will let me see your papers, and take your hatches off."

"Well, I suppose I must; but I do it under protest, and I shall report it to my owners. This is a trader bound for St. Kitts, with a general cargo; I don't see why I should be fired at, and brought-to."

The papers and the contents of the hold fully bearing out the skipper's statement, the lieutenant shoved off as soon as possible, muttering maledictions on his captain for placing him in such a humiliating position.

Meanwhile, the master was anxious about the ship, for there are patches of reef under the lee of these islands. He was constantly interrogating the leadsman as to the depth of water.

"We had better fill and keep her away a bit, sir," he said; "they are getting very little over four fathoms now——"

"Oh! she's all right—and if we run to leeward, and that chap hauls close on a wind and gets through this side of St. Kitts——"

"We can always catch him with steam, sir. What's that—half three?"

"And a quarter, three!" sang out the leadsman. Now, this means nineteen feet, six inches—and the *Jaguar* drew over eighteen feet.

"Fill, and keep her away," said Gilroy; "haul aft the jib-sheet—flatten in forward! Hard up the helm! Easy ahead!"

"Lee mainbrace!" cried the first lieutenant; but before the mainyard could be braced up, or the ship's head paid off by the jib, a tremor ran through her—the masts quivered a little, and there was a distinct sound under foot of the grating of the keel upon a coral bottom.

"Mark three!" cried the leadsman; and the *Jaguar*, forging ahead a little, fixed herself firmly on a coral reef!

Had Bob Gilroy backed his headyards promptly, and steamed astern, instead of filling the mainyard, the catastrophe might have been averted.

The brig had just filled, when, seeing the bustle on board the man-of-war—sails being hurriedly furled, engines going wildly astern, and so on—the skipper realised what had happened. His own craft only drawing twelve feet, he put his helm up, and ran close round the *Jaguar's* stern.

"Hallo, captain!" he shouted; "you'd better have been looking after your own ship's bottom, instead of worrying about what I carry in mine! Shall I report you 'All well'?"

He received no reply—Bob Gilroy's sense of humour was not equal to such a severe strain.

It took him twenty-four hours to get his ship off, and some damage to her bottom necessitated docking; so he was compelled to make a detailed report to the Admiral, who promptly sent him, after being docked at Halifax, to relieve the *Tiger* in the Gulf of Mexico—and kept him there, out of harm's way, for nearly twelve months. It was long before he heard the last of the "slave-chase!"

THE MARVELLOUS ESCAPE OF H.M.S. "GUARDIAN"

Brave hearts ! to Britain's pride
Once so faithful and so true,
On the deck of fame that died,
With the gallant, good Riou :
Soft sigh the winds of heaven o'er their grave !

SUCH are the terms in which Thomas Campbell the poet alludes to the hero of this tale, who met his death in April 1801 at the Battle of Copenhagen ; terms which, in fact, follow precisely the wording of Lord Nelson's official report of the action, and which, in a document of this nature, are probably unique—"the gallant and good Captain Riou."

Many years before Copenhagen, Edward Riou had established a reputation for devotion to duty, marvellous coolness and courage in moments of deadly peril, whether from shot and shell or stress of weather, combined with most admirable and considerate treatment of his subordinates ; and upon no occasion did these splendid qualities shine more brightly than in the circumstances now to be related.

In December 1789 Riou, then a lieutenant, was in command of the *Guardian*, a small frigate employed as a transport on a voyage from the Cape of Good Hope to the comparatively new colony of New South Wales in Australia, then, as for many years subsequently, used as a place of banishment for English convicts.

The *Guardian* had, in fact, a number of convicts on board, and was also laden with cattle, and a large quantity of stores and provisions for the colony—a somewhat unpleasant cargo,

which her commander no doubt was anxious to discharge as soon as possible.

On the 24th of December, being then in latitude 44 south and longitude 41°30 east—that is, to the south-eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, somewhere near Marion and Prince Edward Islands—a huge berg, or island of ice, was sighted; and as the cattle needed a large supply of water, Riou determined to replenish his store by shipping a quantity of ice, which, of course, that being the southern summer, would speedily be converted into water.

Accordingly the vessel was skilfully manœuvred close to the iceberg, and all available boats were manned and dispatched upon this unusual and somewhat hazardous duty. The ship, of course, could not be anchored, but was kept under easy sail close by; and, a considerable quantity of ice having been successfully landed on board, sail was made with the object of getting clear of a dangerous neighbour.

Neither Riou nor his officers entertained any apprehension of actual danger; but a huge ice island such as this—probably some miles in length, and, according to the testimony of eye-witnesses, three or four hundred feet in height—may have a very great effect upon the wind, causing a calm, with uncertain and capricious squalls at intervals, under the lee; nor can the precipitous appearance of its sides be taken as any proof that there is deep water close alongside it. Floating ice, whether in large or small masses, is apt to be most deceptive as to its total bulk or shape, for, vast as such an island as this appears, there is only about one-eighth of the whole mass visible above water, and at any point great shelves of ice may project, unseen, below the surface.

Riou was not unaware of this, we may be sure, and it was with some anxiety that he watched the effect of the sails upon the ship. Not without cause, for instead of immediately obeying her helm and standing away from the danger, she yawed about with the treacherous, shifting eddies of wind, drawing nearer rather than otherwise, but still making pro-

Marvellous Escape of H.M.S. "Guardian" 139

gress, more or less parallel with the ice island. She had no luck, however.

Suddenly, with a tremendous crash, the bow came down upon a submerged ice-reef; then the stern, swinging round, struck again and again; a few crashing blows, and the rudder had gone, the sternpost and frames were splintered, jagged pieces of timber floated up alongside, dire witnesses of disaster.


Cool and determined, Riou and his officers induced the crew to trim the sails. Gradually the ship gathered way, and appeared to be getting clear; but she struck again, with greater violence than before, nearly under the mainmast, then bumped along on the ice until she left it astern—bumped with such roughness in the heavy swell that serious damage was inevitable.

However, she shot clear, and, with a strong breeze and considerable mist, they soon lost sight of the iceberg.

The rudder had gone—a most serious matter; but the loss might be made good in a certain measure by sundry devices known to seamen, and all hoped that the other damage was not considerable.

Soon after eight o'clock in the evening the carpenter dispelled their hopes. There was two feet of water in the hold, and it was increasing very rapidly, and so the dismal word was passed, "Rig the pumps! Man the pumps!" A dismal and terrible cry, indeed, under the circumstances, for the ship was more than one thousand miles from land—the small islands mentioned above were not then discovered—rudderless, in a region where gales of wind are more the rule than the exception, accompanied by a sea such as is encountered in no other quarter of the globe. "All hands to the pumps!"

And to the pumps they all went, literally, officers included, with the exception of a few men who were set to clear the deck of the cattle—by driving or hoisting the poor brutes overboard—and of such heavy stores, etc., as were most handy. These men performed prodigies, getting rid, in an hour or



two, of an enormous quantity of stuff, while the bulk of the crew strained at the pumps, encouraged and assisted by their gallant commander, who never for a moment displayed the smallest sign of fear or disquietude.

But the water gained : at nine o'clock the carpenter reported three and a half feet ; an hour later, five feet ; and by this time, every man on board having been hard at work since the ship first struck the ice, it became evident to Riou that some rest was necessary, by turns ; so he told off the convicts, half to each watch of seamen, the officers being similarly divided. For his part, he was "Jack of both watches," and took a short spell off when he could.

The men, still inspired and encouraged by his dauntless bearing, worked like heroes in their watches ; but the wind was rising, and by midnight it was blowing a gale, with six feet of water in the hold.

Christmas Day dawned upon them—a terrible dawn, the ship labouring in the gigantic seas, the men, with the best of will, scarcely able to stand to the pumps on the slippery deck ; but they did not give in. A few men, under the boatswain, were set to "thrub," or, as it is also termed, "fother" a spare sail—that is, stitch oakum or rope-yarns closely over the whole surface of the canvas, so as to convert it into a great shaggy kind of sheet ; and this, with much difficulty in the sea-way, they contrived, by means of ropes and weights, to get under the ship's bottom, where the damage appeared to be most serious. It does not sound like a good plan for keeping the sea out of a great gaping leak, but it has a considerable effect, for a time at least, the canvas and oakum being drawn strongly into the hole ; and indeed the device seemed likely to be more successful than they dared to hope, for, rallying bravely at the pumps, by eleven o'clock in the forenoon, they had actually reduced the water to nineteen inches—and hope revived.

But only for a time ; the canvas, soaking and fretting against the jagged broken timbers, no doubt began soon to chafe through—it was, in fact, only a studding-sail, made of the lightest canvas

supplied—and before an hour had elapsed the water again began to beat the pumps. A second sail was prepared; but the sea by this time had increased, and frequently broke over the ship with great force, and the sail could not be efficiently placed in position. Still they worked away at the pumps, while the commander and a few others—including the chaplain and the purser—set to work to get out some casks, etc., from the bread-room, having cut a hole in the deck; they were too few, however, for such heavy work, and a cask, falling back, crushed Riou's hand badly, so they all went back to help at the pumps.

Another awful night—an increasing gale, rising to hurricane force, blew away the fore- and main-topsails: at midnight, four and a half feet of water, and one pump hopelessly broken down; at six o'clock, seven feet of water, and the ship wallowing helplessly in a most tremendous sea.

Then despair began to creep in—what wonder? Men hid themselves away in corners, shirking the grinding, useless labour at the pumps; the officers were compelled to use threats to them, and then did not succeed in persuading all to persevere. There was talk of getting out the boats—and how desperate must be the plight of men who will venture an open boat in such a sea!—and, indeed, orders had already been issued to have them in readiness; masts and sails, casks of water and compasses were seen to, and provisions got up from below.

Long before this, Lieutenant Riou, in spite of his cheerful demeanour, had given up hope of saving the ship, and had confided in his officers. The precise state of affairs was, as far as possible, kept from the ship's company; but this, of course, could not be for long.

Riou regretted with his officers the loss of so many brave fellows; and while he gave his consent to as many as possible taking to the boats, never for a moment contemplated joining them. "As for me," he said, "I have determined to remain in the ship, and shall endeavour to make my presence useful as long as there is any occasion for it.

And this he did to the last, disregarding the entreaties of his officers that he would attempt to save himself in one of the boats—they told him that it was even criminal to persevere in such a determination, being probably very strongly moved by the affection with which his splendid nature had inspired them—but he was not to be moved, and went about seeing personally to the equipment of the boats, “as calm and collected as in the happier moments of his life.”

As sunset approached, it was evident that the vessel could not float much longer ; utterly water-logged, she reeled and lurched apparently in the last throes, and Riou, giving orders for the boats to be hoisted out, wrote the following letter to the Secretary to the Admiralty :

“H.M. Ship *Guardian*,
“December 25, 1789.

“SIR,

“If ever any part of the officers or crew of the *Guardian* should ever survive to get home, I have only to say their conduct after the fatal stroke against an island of ice was admirable, and wonderful in everything that related to their duties, considered either as private men or His Majesty’s service.

“As there seems to be no possibility of my remaining many hours in this world, I beg leave to recommend to the consideration of the Admiralty a sister, who, if my conduct and services should be found deserving any memory, their favour might be shown to her—together with a widowed mother.

“I am, sir, remaining with great respect,

“Your ever obedient and humble servant,

“G. STEPHENS, ESQ.”

“E. RIOU.

This manly and generous epistle he entrusted to one of his officers, and then superintended the hoisting out and loading of the boats—a dangerous and difficult business, which was accomplished, in the first instance, without mishap. But to lie alongside was more dangerous still ; the ship, rising on the

giant seas, would lurch and tumble headlong in the trough, and every moment a boat was in danger of being sucked under her and swamped.

Eventually, after some very exciting scenes, the launch, cutter, and jolly-boat got away; but the jolly-boat almost immediately foundered, and the cutter apparently was also lost. It was not until long after dark that those in the launch finally left the neighbourhood of the water-logged *Guardian*—perhaps they still hoped that Lieutenant Riou might be induced to join them; but he had no such intention. When the boats had cleared, he walked the quarterdeck, and seemed happy that they had got off safely.

The launch was eventually picked up by a French merchant vessel, and those on board her were most kindly treated, after the great hardships they had suffered for over a week. They arrived in Table Bay on the 18th of January, 1790, and reported the loss of the *Guardian*, believing themselves to be the only survivors—for they had left her actually sinking.

Edward Riou and his companions—sixty in number—after they lost sight of the boats, after the jolly-boat had foundered before their eyes, were no doubt firmly persuaded that they had but an hour or two to live. The ship was sensibly settling down under them: the hold was absolutely full of water, up to the orlop deck—the lowest deck of all—and was actually breaking through the hatches on this deck, and rising towards the lower deck; she was choke-full of water, rudderless, her sails blown away, and a heavy sea running. What chance could she have?

And yet, strange to say, the *Guardian* did not founder; and stranger yet, her preservation was probably due to the enormous extent of her injuries, which shall presently be more fully explained.

Riou, finding his ship still under him, exerted his will and authority over his subordinates, encouraging them to make every effort to get her into port; though it appeared, indeed, an utterly hopeless business. There were on board three midshipmen, the boatswain, the carpenter, three superinten-

dents of convicts, and a daughter of one of them ; a surgeon's mate, thirty seamen and boys, and twenty-one convicts,—enough people, certainly, to take the ship anywhere, had she been seaworthy.

They had an awful time, for nearly two months drifting about at the mercy of every wind that blew. There is no account of any attempt at rigging a "jury" rudder—a thing which has been done at sea at various times, with some degree of success—or whether Riou adopted the still more rough-and-ready device of towing a large spar on each quarter, and hauling in or veering on the attached hawsers ; probably it would have been almost futile in the heavy sea usually prevailing.

In moderate weather, we are told, they were able to keep a course in some fashion ; but more often the ship just sailed to leeward like a haystack. And so the days passed on, without any apparent prospect of reaching Table Bay. Water was scarce, provisions were mouldy and sodden, and before long discontent became very manifest among the crew.

This was the opportunity of a man such as Edward Riou, and he rose to it in the noblest manner. By mingled tact and authority, by alternate remonstrance and severity, as occasion demanded, with a strong background of unfailing courage, he carried the men along with him—in some sort of fashion ; but it was continuous, watchful, day-and-night work for him, and did not always avail. Matters grew worse and worse—the men threatened his life, because he refused to permit them to leave the ship on a raft ; and it was only his knowledge that the drift of the ship had, for some days, been towards their goal that enabled him finally to restrain them. The raft was put together, in defiance of his orders, and was on the point of being launched, when a fair wind sprang up, and the despairing and rebellious crew were persuaded once more to trust in their undaunted commander, instead of rushing to destruction—for they could not long have survived on a raft in that latitude.

At length, on the 21st of February, land was sighted ; and

before the evening the battered, water-logged, hopelessly incredible old *Guardian* was moored in Table Bay—incredible in a sense, for when she was beached in Table Bay, the injuries she had sustained were found to be so extensive that no seaman would have believed it possible that she could have survived. Under bow and stern there were enormous breaches in her timbers; the mass of water had burst up the orlop deck, and the lower deck was thus exposed to the strain. This was, however, a remarkably strong deck, and the hatches were well secured; the result was, that the numerous casks in the hold floated up close under the lower deck, which thus became a kind of raft, keeping the vessel afloat, while the iron and shingle ballast in the bottom of the ship *fell out* or was washed out through the gaping holes beaten by the ice, thus lightening her to a considerable extent—so that it may be said, as remarked above, that the extent of her injuries in a great measure contributed to her salvation: this was the opinion of contemporary seamen.

The convicts who were on board were subsequently sent on to their destination in Australia, but not without a promise from Riou that, if he could procure their release, they should not long remain there. He interceded for them with the Admiralty and with the Governor, describing their "excellent assistance" after the disaster; but it does not appear that this appeal was successful.

It was, after all, Edward Riou, and no one else, who saved the ship, and sixty-one lives—his undaunted courage, his tact and humanity, his power of will; and when he returned to England, he was justly rewarded with his promotion to the rank of commander. He became a post captain a year later, and in 1801, when in command of the *Amazon*, a 40-gun frigate, he had a very hot corner, together with half a dozen smaller vessels under his orders, at the Battle of Copenhagen—too hot, indeed, for the little squadron; and Riou, his ship battered and his men falling fast, was compelled to haul off. In the act of doing so, the ship's stern being towards a powerful Danish fort, a tremendous fire swept the deck, and Riou,

seeing the men who were hauling on the mainbrace carried off by twos and threes, went and clapped on himself, exclaiming, "Come, then, my lads, we'll all die together!" At that moment a round shot cut him in two.

His name is not so well known as those of our great naval commanders; it will be held in honour, however, by those who read this story.

A VOYAGE FROM ARCHANGEL

ON the 8th of October, in the year 1697, there sailed out of the port of Archangel the English ship *Ann*, of Yarmouth, 250 tons, bound for London. She was commanded by Thomas Allison, a fine, hardy seaman, well acquainted with these stormy northern seas, and was a staunch, seaworthy vessel.

Captain Allison had, however, perhaps with the confidence which is bred of familiarity with local dangers, delayed his departure rather long, for Archangel, which you will find on the White Sea, in the extreme north of Russia, is completely ice-bound during the greater part of the year, being open for commerce by sea only from June to October. Certainly the good ship *Ann* was able to clear the harbour and get over the bar before the ice set in ; but in these high latitudes, as all Arctic explorers tell us, gales of wind are rather the rule than the exception, more especially in the winter months. The first part of Captain Allison's homeward voyage round North Cape was sure to be very stormy, and when stormy weather is combined with intense cold, the handling of a sailing ship is no light matter, and the risk of disaster upon a rocky and dangerous coast is decidedly increased.

Out he went, however, in full confidence, hoping in a few days to get round North Cape and shape for England. Let it be noted that he sailed upon a *Friday*, which seamen have for centuries accounted as a very unlucky day, and, indeed, there are quite modern instances of the crew absolutely refusing to put to sea upon that day. I do not know how old this superstition is, but it was certainly in vogue at that time. Thomas Allison, however, paid no heed to it, and I am not

saying that sailing on a Friday made any difference to him ; but he was a very long while getting round North Cape, and I think his owners and friends must have given him up.

We learn all about his doings from a journal which he kept—a very simple daily tale of the experiences of himself and his crew, which, if you take it merely as it is written, is dry enough reading, and I am not going to give it to you in this form. If, however, we read between the lines a little, and bring some seamanlike knowledge and study of character to bear upon it, we shall, I hope, find an interesting story of fortitude and good discipline at the back of it, and a vivid picture also of the hardships attendant upon wintering, when entirely unprepared for it, in a very high latitude.

All went well for the first few days, and by Sunday evening Captain Allison had got through the comparatively narrow entrance of the White Sea, and was shaping his course to the north-west, along the jagged and rocky coast of Lapland, towards North Cape.

Then there came what seamen term baffling winds—calms, with light, variable breezes in between. Progress was very slow, only forty-eight miles being covered on the 12th and 13th—one knot per hour. They had not long to complain of too little wind, however : on the 14th commenced a run of stormy weather, with fierce, shifting squalls, and “a great sea came rowling out of the West.” This was the precursor of a “sore storm,” which compelled them to “lay to” under snug canvas.

On Saturday the 23rd of October they sighted North Kyne, a cape on the north of Norway, about fifty miles east of North Cape, which latter was seen on the 25th, by moonlight, at 4 a.m., on the lee bow, very stormy weather continuing, the wind constantly shifting about—and then the real trouble commenced.

Finding that he could not weather North Cape, Captain Allison went about and stood to the eastward, hoping to gain ground to the Northward ; but a vessel cannot make way to windward in such blustering weather, and it speedily became

apparent that they would not weather North Kyne: in other words, the ship was on a lee shore, with a gale of wind blowing—and what was to be done?

Allison was too good a seaman to run unnecessary risks.

"After I had considered our condition, I called my men together, and told them my resolution; which was to run up the wide fuel (that was then before us) while the day lasted, reasoning with them, that to spend the day in tacking before it was to disable ourselves and perhaps split our sails, and, when night came, to drive upon the rocks, would be to the hazard of our lives, ship, and goods."

A "fuel," as Captain Allison explains in a footnote, is a deep gulf or inlet, of which the further end cannot be seen from the entrance.

Now, there are two such fuels between North Cape and North Kyne—the longer one, nearest North Cape, being now known as Porsanger Fiord, the other as Laxe Fiord; and there is no doubt, from Allison's rough chart, that it was Laxe Fiord to which he alluded, and into which he ran. Its shores, as is the case with all bays and fiords on this rugged and picturesque coast, are indented with numerous small coves and harbours, and in one of these Allison hoped to find a temporary haven. Accordingly, the order was "up helm, and run for it"; and the good ship *Ann*, with the gale over her stern, flew for the refuge—not without some risk, for the thick snow-squalls frequently obscured the land entirely, and the captain, standing by the helm, was compelled several times to take in the foresail, as it prevented him from seeing ahead; but he set it again whenever it was possible, and the ship drove into the fiord with the spray flying from her stem, the tremendous squalls, which always prevail in such land-locked waters, tearing at the canvas, and perhaps hurrying her past some likely haven in the blinding snow before her way could be checked.

The small bay which they at length discovered is on the east side of the fiord. Allison kept the lead going, but the leadsman did not often get any bottom, for the water is very

deep on this precipitous coast, and it was quite likely that, when he found a harbour, he would be unable to anchor in it.

Shooting round the headland, they found a capital anchorage in twenty-five fathoms. The sails were clewed up, the anchor let go—the ship was safe, to their great relief.

This little haven, sheltered from all but north-west winds—and partially even from these—was probably what is now known as Torske, or, possibly, Lille Torske, just south of it; I am not quite sure which, as the chart is too rough to go by in detail.

The cove was a small one, and a hawser was immediately taken on shore and made fast to a rock to keep her stern from swinging too near the shore; but after a heavy squall the anchor was lifted again, and once more let go, with a long scope of cable. "Then," says Allison, "after all things were stowed, and we thought ourselves very well, and went to supper, I felt the ship rub on the ground"; so they had to quit their well-earned meal, and heave in the cable—indeed, it was not until several days had elapsed that they got the ship into a thoroughly safe position, which is illustrated by a little tracing in Captain Allison's journal. This harbour was, he tells us, only one mile in length from the entrance, and about 400 yards wide; his chart is a little out in its proportions, but we can readily forgive so slight an error on the part of a plucky and careful seaman, with only rough appliances for chart-making at his command. The harbour, he tells us, was in seventy-one degrees north latitude*—well within the Arctic Circle—considerably farther north than Archangel, whence they had sailed three weeks previously, and which, as we have seen, is ice-bound for eight or nine months of the year.

Allison persistently regarded his stay here as a temporary interruption of his homeward voyage: he set his men to

* There is, however, no such harbour in precisely this latitude; but Lille Torske is in seventy degrees forty-one min. latitude, and Torske about ten miles farther north—so Captain Allison's figure is not far out.

repairing the sails, and reduced their allowance of certain provisions in order that they might have full allowance at sea.

It was now the end of October, and already, owing to the high land overshadowing the anchorage, they had practically lost sight of the sun ; snow lay very thick upon the ground, and the surface was frozen so hard that it would bear a man's weight.

The chief employment of the crew from this time onward was keeping up the supply of wood and water ; fortunately there was abundance of both, but the task of obtaining it became increasingly arduous as the winter drew on. The snow came so far up the small trees, that they were hacked off wherever they could be got at, and dragged down the steep slope to the beach, there to be cut up and stowed in the long-boat ; but they usually only obtained one boat-load in a day, the frost greatly hampering the men at their work.

On the 5th of November came a fair wind for escaping, and resuming the voyage ; but there was a great deal too much of it, blowing a perfect hurricane, and three days later it blew so hard from south-west that the shore-fasts and one anchor gave way, and the ship was driven over to the north-east side of the harbour, the best bower anchor alone saving her from destruction—she did, in fact, take the ground, damaging the rudder considerably.

And now Captain Allison was forced to the conclusion that he could not get away by the light of that moon—there was very little daylight by this time—so he secured the ship more firmly in her former position, and made her snug aloft ; but the sails, having been previously soaking wet, were frozen as hard as wood, and it was quite impossible to unbend them.

By way of fresh meat, the men had captured three foxes, two of which they roasted, "the flesh looking black, like a hare ; but upon taste, I liked no such rank venison. The third ran down into the hold and could not be presently found ; but a month after, having played the thief with a piece of our beef, he was knocked on the head, and, being too lean for food, was thrown overboard."

They set to work to repair the rudder, but the cold was so severe that the men could not remain at work outside more than a quarter of an hour at a time.

"At this time," says Allison, on the 16th of November, "two of our company were mightily for fitting up a house upon land, and putting provision therein for subsistence, in case we should be forced ashore and wrecked. But I could not comply with such advice, knowing the ship to be warmer than anything we could build ashore, with the materials, time, and light we had to do it. Withal I imagined that, had we had a place to our wish upon *terra firma*, I could not have persuaded them to do what they did; but that the only way of preserving ourselves and all we had about us was by keeping it altogether, and making the ship the sole place of retreat and refuge. Besides, I ever spurred them up to action, expressing daily the hopes I had of getting out, foreseeing that by their sitting altogether by the fire they might grow diseased and unfit for service; on the contrary, that exercise, and the exposing themselves to the air frequently, would render them more hardy and healthy."

No one will dispute the wisdom of this reasoning; and, in fact, a well-built ship, with her thick wooden sides and decks, all well caulked and water-tight, is warmer than an ordinary house.

Fearing lest the hard frost might render the anchors brittle and unreliable, Captain Allison made his carpenter saw off about twelve feet of a big spare spar, and this he embedded in the ground about seven feet, filling up round it with earth, stones, and water, which soon froze into such a hard mass that the spar was immovably fixed, and served as a hold-fast for cables, etc., during the whole winter.

It was now so cold, that keeping night-watch was abandoned, as no one could stand the exposure; a boy had his whole feet seriously frost-bitten, and was lucky, through the surgeon's skilful treatment, in escaping with ten days on the sick-list.

On the 20th of November Allison took stock of his provisions, seeing little hope, however he might endeavour to encourage his men, of getting out before the spring; and he

caused a great wooden hearth to be laid down in the fore-castle, covering nearly the whole floor-space, piling stones and clay upon it, and making a funnel from a big cask, reduced in diameter at one end. Here the crew congregated round a great roaring wood fire; and the warmer they kept in the fore-castle, the more work they had in cutting wood, of which they consumed an enormous quantity. By the end of the month the beer was all frozen, and a cask of water became a solid block of ice in twelve hours. There was great difficulty in watering, as the ice formed a thick, solid crust over the running streams, requiring immense labour to break it; and then, in the awful cold, they had to dip the water, by means of basins, into buckets, and carry it down to the cask in the boat. The buckets became half-filled with ice, as hard as iron, weighing more, and holding less and less water.

The work went on, however, for Captain Allison would permit no skulking or yielding, and on the 10th of December he encouraged his men by reminding them that (as was reckoned at that time) this was the shortest day, and they should now prepare for sea; and on the following day he sent his mate in the boat, with orders to find some other harbour into which they could put in case they should not be able to regain their present anchorage.

All this, as he plainly tells us, was done by the captain to encourage his men, who were constantly frost-bitten, sore, and unspeakably miserable from the intense cold, and some, no doubt, disposed to lie down and give up the struggle. They had a certain amount of what may be termed Arctic clothing, but their outfit was by no means complete, nor was their ship adapted; as is a regular exploring vessel, for such weather; and the constant grubbing about in the water, cutting and hauling wood, breaking the ice in the long-boat with hammers, and levering it out with crow-bars, was a more terrible trial, perhaps, than we can easily realise. The after-result of even a moderate frost-bite is intensely painful, and these men were continually compelled to use their sore and festering hands at hard manual labour.

Well, the captain sent the mate away exploring, and spoke cheerfully of getting ready for sea, to hearten up his men, concealing his own well-grounded fears within his kind and stout heart; but when the mate returned, reporting a snug anchorage inside an island some little distance down the fiord, the weather becoming milder, he appears actually to have contemplated a move, by moonlight, for the open sea.

On the 13th of December the yards were sent aloft again, more water was got on board, and the rudder-head was further strengthened; on the following day the topmasts were got up, and one of the hawsers got on board, in readiness for departure. The wind, however, was unfavourable, and the following evening it blew so hard from north-west that they had to strike all their spars again in a blinding snow-storm—and that was the end of the attempt, which, I am disposed to think, was all the better for good Captain Allison and his crew. If they had got out of harbour in such weather, the men could not have handled the sails, and they would almost certainly have lost the ship, and their lives.

Then it froze harder than ever, so that "everything became ice that was capable of being made so."

Still, the routine of watering and wooding must go on, and shell-fish were collected in large quantities from the rocks, in spite of the cold, in which, as Allison observes, it appeared marvellous that they could exist, when it nearly killed his men.

On Christmas Day full allowance was issued all round; the crew, as Allison says, "thought not of hauling sharp for it afterwards," and puts in a footnote—"sea-term for pinching the belly."

However, he helped on the feast with a bottle of strong beer, from his own stock, to every two men, which was greatly appreciated, and that night they saw the *Aurora Borealis*, which Allison terms the "Northern Glance."

Then came a regular thaw, the ice falling away from the ship, and even disappearing from some of the hill-tops. They were able to loose the mainsail and air it, and once

more the hope arose that they might sail homewards—when back came the frost again ; but the moon was once more favourable, the men were set to clear the ice and snow off the deck, and on the 12th of January two of the holdfasts were got on board—and then the cold became more cruel than ever. Frost-bites were many and serious, and the doctor was kept very busy. No one appears, however, to have lost any fingers or toes, and this the captain ascribes entirely to the skill of the “Chirurgion,” adding, “In justice and gratitude I am obliged to mention his name : William Brown of Great Yarmouth, and educated there under his father, of the same profession.” And very right, too, that his name should be mentioned.

Then came two or three days so cold that no one could be allowed outside, followed by moderate weather, with a south-east wind—a fair wind for sailing. Up went the topmasts and yards again, hawsers cast off, and all ready for a start ; but no luck ! The following morning a heavy gale compelled them once more to make all snug ; and terrible work it was, handling the ropes and spars with their sore hands, in a tremendous accession of frost. It blew so hard in the squalls that the stiff and ice-laden cables and hawsers were strained until they came ripping up through the surface ice, and stretched taut and horizontal, “as level as that of a rope-dancer.”

This was the end of January, the coldest time, perhaps, of the whole year in the northern hemisphere, and they were hard put to it to find any water at all. Full casks of water were split asunder by the expansion of the solid body of ice ; the cook, armed with an iron crow-bar, broke up great lumps of ice for the pot, his hands protected by fur gloves and mittens, or the contact with the iron would have skinned them.

On the first of February they saw the sun ; but his appearance brought no mitigation of the cold. The ship's side at the water-line was laden with a huge ledge of ice, which they broke off with mauls and “beetles” (great wooden mallets used in caulking a ship), and when a south wind blew next day, it was impossible to handle the hawsers, “which mightily discouraged

us, and almost stifled all thoughts of going. To mention all the discourses our people had at times, and upon several occurrences, would fill a bigger volume; and a great many more I had set down, had it not been so great a trouble to write. 'Twas vexatious enough to get my ink ready for use, and no less to keep it so, a boy being forced to thaw it as oft as I had occasion to dip my pen."

How many men would have kept a journal under such circumstances?

The cruel cold continued. Captain Allison reserved for his own use the round-house on deck, cutting a small hatch inside it, so that he had access to it without going out upon deck. His mattress was firmly frozen to the deck for weeks, and every nail and bolt in the woodwork had a stick of ice attached to it.

Another stock-taking on the 7th of February revealed the necessity of a further restriction in rations—one piece of salt beef had to suffice for six men, and a pint of split peas for four *—"and to prevent all discontent and murmuring, I kept myself, as I had done all along, upon the level with them, giving them leave to take the first piece in choice, and I the second for my own mess."

The ship's-rations were supplèmented by shell-fish, sea-eggs (or "sea-urchins," which you will often find upon our English shores, though I daresay you have never tried eating them), a kind of sea-weed, and so on; but they rarely succeeded in catching any fresh fish. The salt beef was kept "in soak," and prevented from freezing too hard, by keeping a portion constantly hanging overboard, in a great wicker case. On one occasion the rope was chafed through by the ice, and thirteen pieces of beef were lost; they dragged for it in vain, the only result being that the mate nearly lost some of his fingers through frost-bite from holding the drag-rope.

* Probably a "piece" of beef weighed about four pounds, with little or no bone in it, so each man would get about ten ounces—by no means starvation allowance, though salt beef has not, of course, the same amount of nourishment in it as fresh meat.

"Alas!" says Allison, "had we but had store of proper and nourishing food, our sufferings from the cold would have been easily borne by so many hardy and lusty men as I had then on board, with the plenty of firing we met with."

This is constantly the lot of seamen who winter in Arctic latitudes, where it is impossible to convey a liberal stock of provisions for many months; but the crew of the *Ann* had not the concentrated nourishing preparations which are now supplied to exploring parties.

On the 8th of February, the weather being milder, the ship was pumped out for the first time since leaving Archangel—she had only nine inches of water in her, a fact which speaks well for her builders—and on this day they again weighed two of the anchors, and, with gallant persistence, once more prepared for sea.

On the 15th one of the crew died—the only death which occurred, and he had been ailing since they left Archangel. He was buried on the following day, at low-water mark, the frost being too deep in the ground to dig a grave higher up.

The days passed without bringing any hope of immediate release. Again and again were anchors raised, spars sent aloft, etc., only to be sent down again in a hurry, with a pitiless, blistering, blast of frost-laden wind cutting their limbs and faces. Still the almost daily excursions must be made for wood and water, shell-fish, etc.; some of the party, frequently returning prostrated by the cold, were hauled up the ship's side by their comrades.

On the 28th of February Captain Allison called together his ship's company and addressed them: "I told them that the time had spent so much of our provisions, that we could not venture to sea with what we had remaining, where we should be deprived of all the little comforts and helps we had from the shore, and therefore, while we had anything left, we must go and make search for people, whereby to get provision to carry us out of this place and to our much-desired homes. That since Almighty God had wonderfully preserved us till this

time, when the weather was grown more moderate and the days of a brave length, we ought not only to express our thanks in words, to that Being of all goodness, for our preservation past, but to be active and industrious for the future, showing ourselves thereby more reasonable creatures."

One cannot but admire this fine, manly sort of religion, which is characteristic of the best type of seaman. If Captain Allison had been a whining, preach-without-practice kind of skipper, they would not have got through that winter without disaffection among the sorely tried ship's company; but he appears always to have set a good example, and to have been emphatically captain of his ship. It is under such circumstances that a good man's worth comes out conspicuously, to the saving of himself and his subordinates.

March came in like a lion, but there were compensating days of comparative warmth, which put fresh life into the men, sails were loosed to dry, sea-eggs and shell-fish were gathered in quantities, without the terrible agony of cold which seemed to sap their very life-blood.

"When night came on, I could not but observe our people as busy as they are usually in a cook's shop about the Exchange of London, between the hours of twelve and two, only with this difference, that every man was there both guest and servant. This with a kettle, that a saucepan, and the other a dish or platter; some dressing dills (as they termed the brown seaweed), some scallops, mussels, and periwinkles, and others boiling sea-eggs in broth, and some brewing of mead; so that at both hearths there were scarce room enough for one to get in between to light a pipe—I can't say of tobacco, for there was none but what I had; what the men smoked for such, they took as much pains to prepare as to cook a dish of meat."

Mead, as you know, perhaps, is a drink made from honey, mixed with water, and allowed to ferment. Other things are necessary to make it really well, and what was concocted on board the *Ann* was probably a poor makeshift, but acceptable to the seamen for lack of better liquor. The cargo consisted

in part of honey, and Captain Allison, quite justifiably, used some of it for this purpose.

As for tobacco, most boys have probably attempted some substitute for it—brown paper, coffee, etc. ; though cigarettes are so deplorably cheap—and nasty—nowadays, that perhaps these expedients of my youth are no longer in vogue. The crew of the *Ann* made use of the bark and fibre of certain trees, which they shred and mixed up ; but I am afraid it was but a poor business, after all.

In accordance with the captain's words, the long-boat was hoisted in, and made thoroughly sea-worthy ; a hearth was constructed for a fire in her bottom, and a sail prepared to form an awning, or shelter. The men, except four who were sick, drew lots who should go upon the expedition of discovery, "and they fell to six as able as I could have picked out ; howbeit, two of them bought it off with two others, for ten shillings each." The second mate went in charge, provided with money, linen, and other things to trade with ; but he does not appear to have been very enterprising, for he returned the same evening, without any result or news. He was dispatched again on the following day (the 11th of March), no doubt with some admonition from his captain to be a little more pushing and venturesome, for he was not back again in such a hurry this time.

There were some small houses or huts near the anchorage, with accommodation for ponies or cattle, but uninhabited. On the 15th of March some people were seen approaching in boats. Upon being hailed, they pulled away, apparently frightened, nor was any more seen of them. Captain Allison imagined they were the owners of the little houses, returning for residence after the winter.

On the 17th came welcome news : a Norwegian boat appeared carrying four of the long-boat's crew, and one Finlander. Communication was established with North Cape Island, and a very acceptable supply of provisions was soon obtained—indeed, the people were exceedingly kind and generous to them, and expressed great surprise that they had

survived in their vessel a winter which was considered exceptionally severe.

The 26th of March was the happy day of their release from the confinement of the friendly little harbour, which had proved alike their prison and their salvation. At daybreak the ship was unmoored, the remaining anchor hove short. "By the time our men had got their breakfast (which was a high word with us then, and we began to speak it cheerfully), it proved a fair gale at south-west; we heaved up our anchor, and cast off our hawser, and got out to the fuel, where we found the wind fair and southerly."

We can picture with what zest the seamen, after a hearty breakfast, buckled to at the windlass, and rattled the anchor up to a quaint and cheerful "shanty"; short commons and frost-bitten fingers forgotten, or at least disregarded—for you do not easily forget a bad frost-bite—once more in the open fiord, with a fair wind—for home; or at any rate on the road home. There was North Cape first to be doubled, and the weather remained decidedly arctic in character. Baffled by southerly winds, they reached as far north as $73^{\circ} 25'$; a gale of wind with a tremendous frost coated the ship with ice, and the sails, furled after some sort of fashion with the utmost exertion, proved equally difficult to set when the weather moderated. So hard frozen were they, that tackles had to be applied, and all hands clapped on, pulling gingerly for fear of tearing the canvas; and even then the mainsail was only half set, while it took all the watch two hours to loose and set the sprit-sail, a much smaller sail, set on the bowsprit. The foretopsail refused to quit the top, do what they would, and this and the maintopsail were only set on the following day after hours of labour in the piercing wind. This difficulty in handling the sails was again experienced a day or two later, after another blow, and the crew were terribly exhausted by the struggle with the frozen canvas and the bitter cold—the deck thickly coated with ice, and every rope like a bar of iron.

They had heard before quitting Norway that peace was

concluded with France; but not feeling confident on this point, Captain Allison, sighting three ships when south of the Orkney Islands, "caused a clear ship to be made, and put ourselves in as good a posture of defence as we were able. I furled my small sails and mainsail, and by that time one of them came within shot of my weather bow. I fired a shot for him to come to leeward of me, which he very honestly did, and confirmed the news of peace to the great joy of our hearts; for God knows we were but in a bad condition for managing our guns in a way of fighting."

However, their troubles were nearly over. On the 21st of April, at four o'clock in the afternoon, they sighted Foulness, near Cromer, on the round of the coast of Norfolk; and, to their surprise, found the land under snow—our English climate was playing some of its tricks, with which we moderns are all too familiar. During the night it blew fresh, with snow, so they had a last taste of winter in the English spring.

On the 22nd they anchored off Yarmouth, to the great joy of the owners, one of whom had but three hours previously offered to sell his share of the ship for three guineas! Fortunately he found no taker.

And so we bid farewell to Captain Allison, who was a very fine man, with a high sense of duty, and a stout heart to back it up.

THE SAVING OF THE "MAGNIFICENT"

EARLY in the year 1813 the following letter appeared in the *Naval Chronicle*:

"'MAGNIFICENT,' CAWSAND BAY,
"28th of Dec., 1812.

"MR. EDITOR,—

"An extraordinary piece of seamanship has been performed in this ship, the last breeze, by Captain Hayes, which saved this beautiful 74 and the lives of all the crew; and as I think it ought to be made public, for the benefit of others who may be, in future, placed in a similar situation, I send enclosed the particulars to you, which, if thought worthy of your notice, will, I trust, find a place in the *Naval Chronicle*. That the ship was saved, and that we all owe our lives to Captain Hayes' masterly conduct in the hour of peril and danger, is most certain; and I assure you there is not one in the ship who does not feel grateful to him for his conduct on the trying occasion.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient humble servant,

"'A MAGNIFICENT.'"

The particulars follow—a regular salt-water yarn, which "A *Magnificent*" tells like a seaman; but I do not propose to tell it quite in the same manner. It is such a fine example of seamanlike skill, presence of mind, and good discipline, that I wish to include it in this collection, and I am also anxious that you should comprehend the situation, and understand the meaning of the various measures taken by the gallant and

resourceful Captain John Hayes, which certainly saved his ship and crew.

On the west coast of France, about halfway down the Bay of Biscay, you will find an island, close off the coast—Ile de Rhé, or sometimes Ré; and just south of this is another, Ile d'Oléron, separated from the first by six or seven miles.

It was here, nearly midway between these two islands, that the *Magnificent* anchored, about five o'clock on the afternoon of the 16th of December, 1812. It needs only a glance at the map to realise that this might prove a very dangerous anchorage, being completely open to the westerly gales which have given the Bay of Biscay such a bad name—and as you may "give a dog a bad name, and hang him," so "the Bay" has retained a terrible reputation up to the present day, though there is no worse weather there than anywhere else. I have crossed it a good many times, and only once encountered anything approaching a gale of wind. The reason for this bad character is that the prevailing direction of winter gales is anywhere between south-west and north-west, and frequently the most furious wind comes from due west; so that, in the days of sailing ships, it was extremely risky to be caught there, as a vessel was very likely to be driven on shore. For the same reason, as already remarked, it was a dangerous coast to anchor off, unless you could get into some sheltered harbour.

However, seamen must take their chances, and especially seamen on men-of-war; and circumstances apparently rendered it necessary for Captain Hayes to drop his anchor here, just before dark, on this December day. He let go his starboard anchor—in those days termed the "best bower" anchor, and usually a heavier one than the port anchor, known as the "small bower." There was about fourteen fathoms of water, and the big rope cable was paid out to a long "scope," which would ensure the ship riding easily in the swell which was sure to be setting in from the Atlantic.

The weather was dirty, and she had not been long at anchor before the wind suddenly increased in a squall from S.W.

by W.—a bad quarter for the *Magnificent*, tending to drive her directly on the rocky shoals fringing Ile de Rhé; so the cable was veered to 150 fathoms (or 300 yards), and topgallant-masts and yards were sent down—and, indeed, there was ample ground for apprehension a little later, when it was discovered that she was dragging her anchor.

Upon this the small bower anchor was let go, and the lower yards and topmasts were struck, this being the utmost that could be done in the way of making the ship “snug” aloft. It was a heavy piece of work, the topmasts being huge, thick spars in a vessel of this size, and the lower yards also very big things to handle, extending many feet beyond the ship on either side. It was, of course, customary to have everything provided and stowed conveniently at all times for the purpose, while every man knew his proper station—and, indeed, the jack-tars of those days used to make very little of it.

The second anchor brought the ship up; but she had drifted more than was at all pleasant meanwhile, for the water had shoaled to ten fathoms, and in the dim light the sea could just be seen breaking furiously on the reefs astern. A very awkward position: the bottom was rocky, which was all against the rope cables holding, and presently it was found that the ship was in reality only holding by the small bower cable, the other having apparently little or no strain upon it, as though it had parted from the anchor; indeed, on daylight at length breaking, the buoy attached to the best bower anchor could be seen bobbing about on the swell, a mile ahead of the ship—it was obviously unattached, and the sight served also to indicate how far she had drifted.

Daylight, indeed, brought no sort of comfort or encouragement, after an anxious and busy night. The surf appeared terribly close astern, leaping and thundering on the cruel reef; the wind was blowing a gale from W.S.W., with drizzling rain and ever-increasing sea; and while they contemplated this dismal scene, came again the cry from the men stationed with the lead, “Ship’s dragging, sir!”

Immediately the spare anchor was let go, and with this and

the small bower the ship was brought up once more, the wind shifting to west. The rocks were now, according to the writer, within two or three hundred yards astern; and so heavy was the sea, that it occasionally broke upon a shoal patch or rock, *outside* the ship—probably closer in on the shore of the island, not directly to seaward of her.

The situation was desperate. They could not hope that the cables would hold on much longer; and though the wind came round to W.N.W., which would make it possible to lie clear of Ile d'Oléron on the starboard tack, the lower yards and topmasts being struck rendered it impossible to make sail. Such was the opinion of all the experienced seamen on board.

Captain John Hayes had still, however, something up his sleeve; he was not going to lose his ship without some further effort. Luckily, he had the entire confidence of his crew, and could reckon upon their absolute obedience and seaman-like skill; but his orders surprised every one a good deal.

It was held as a matter of course that a ship with lower yards and topmasts struck could not make sail. The great topmasts, of course, overlapped the lower masts halfway down to the deck, and the huge fore- and mainyards hung below them, close above the bulwarks.

Captain Hayes, however, gave orders to sway the lower yards nearly up, in spite of the topmasts being in the way, and to get a "spring" upon the cable of the spare anchor. This means, to get a big hawser from the stern of the ship, and secure it to the cable outside the bow; then, if the cable is paid out, it is evident that by hauling on the hawser you can drag the stern of the ship round. This was a very common device in bombarding shore batteries, and the men were quite familiar with it. On this occasion it was to be used for "casting" the ship, so as to get the wind on the starboard side when the cables were cut, this being the captain's desperate venture—to brace the yards sharp up on the starboard tack, haul in on the "spring," and then set the sails as he cut the cables—a desperate venture. Captain Hayes

thought out every detail; he sent men aloft to clear away the sails, only holding them, furled closely to the yards, with five or six ropeyarn "stops" on either side. A man was stationed at each stop, with orders to slip it instantly when told, but on no account was any sail to be loosed unless that particular sail was mentioned. The yards were braced up; the ropes—the topsail sheets, and fore and main tacks and sheets—for setting the sails as required, were manned; the spring—to the small bower cable, after all, for the spare cable had *already parted*—was brought to the capstan and hove in.

"Now, my lads," cried Captain Hayes, "if you attend to my orders and carry them out smartly, we'll save the ship; otherwise, we go on the rocks and shall all be drowned in a few minutes—it's life or death!"

The spring was hove in a little more, and the ship's stern dragged round so as to bring the wind a little on the starboard bow. Men with sharp axes stood by the cables.

"Cut away!" shouted the captain. A few blows, and the great ropes flew out of the hawse-pipes, leaving the ship free. What a moment! Free, yes—free to go on the rocks.

And every man on board gave up hope a moment later, for, instead of "casting" so as to bring the wind on the starboard side, the ship, under the influence of the great swell rolling in still more or less from W.S.W., fell off the wrong way, her bow chopping round towards the reef.

No sail was set as yet, except the foretopmast staysail, one of the three-cornered headsails which it was hoped would take her round the right way; but the swell was too much for it, and the ship was lost!

Captain Hayes had, however, anticipated the possibility of this mischance, and he was ready for it. Luckily there was no sort of panic—every eye was turned towards him.

"Let fall the foresail and foretopsail! Sheet home! Hard a-starboard the helm!"

Now—perhaps you do not understand this—of course, the topsails were "close-reefed" (made as small as possible), and the courses were also reefed, or else all would have been too

From an engraving by C. Hunt, after a painting by Gilbert.

THE SAVING OF THE "MAGNIFICENT."

"The ship is safe."





big for the spread available, and become mere jelly-bags. As it was, they were set fairly well, but being braced upon the *starboard* tack with the wind on the *port* bow, they were flattened against the mast—"flat-aback"—and could only send the ship astern.

Hayes knew all about that—and he knew also that putting the helm to starboard when the ship went astern would produce a similar result to putting it to port, if the ship was going ahead.

In fact, finding that his ship refused to go one way, he determined to make her come round the other way, *with her head towards the rocks*—it is called "wearing her round on her heel."

The after-yards were squared ; there was precious little time, with that roaring surf waiting for them, and you can fancy how those bluejackets and marines rushed about on deck in obedience to the captain's orders, how their officers steadied and encouraged them, clapping on the ropes themselves, every eye on the captain, while the gale howled aloft.

The wind came nearly dead aft ; in no time, as it appeared, the ship headed straight for the breakers.

"Let fall mainsail and main- and mizen-topsail ! Brace up the after-yards ! Hard a-port the helm !"

So smartly were these orders carried out, that the writer in the *Naval Chronicle* says, "By the time the wind came round on the other side of the stern, the sails and helm acting upon the ship caused her absolutely to *fly* round from the danger, 'like a thing scared at the frightful spectacle.'"

Round she came to the wind on the starboard tack, as intended, and headed clear of danger. Good seamanship and pluck had come off triumphant.

"The ship is safe—keep her south," said Captain Hayes.

And then I expect they left off coiling down ropes for a minute and gave him three jolly good cheers.

That's a good story. You cannot, of course, appreciate it as a seaman can ; but I hope I have made it pretty clear to you,

A RACE FOR A DINNER

A BITTERLY cold, cutting wind was sweeping down the Bosphorus one morning in December, 185—, and making the British and French ships moored in Beicos Bay strain at their cables like large dogs longing to be free, and causing many an anxious look from the various officers of the watch to see if their charges were dragging their anchors.

Inshore of the liners* lay the steamers and small craft, among them H.M.S. *Strongback*, a fine paddle-wheel steamer, mounting six of the largest guns in the navy: and to her upper deck we will now conduct our readers.

The unfortunate officer of the morning watch, with his head buried in the collar of his monkey-jacket and hands deep in the pockets, is stamping up and down the quarter-deck, trying in vain to get warm, and longing for daylight to appear, for then the hands will be turned up, and he will ask the first lieutenant to relieve him for a few minutes while he gets a cup of coffee and puts a little artificial warmth into him.

He has one consolation, however, and that makes him almost cheerful (for he is a great sportsman). This cold will certainly drive the woodcock down, and he anticipates a glorious day's shooting to-day or to-morrow.

On the opposite side of the deck a little midshipman trots up and down, his hands likewise in his pockets, and his

* A "liner" in those days meant a line-of-battleship, a two-decker, or three-decker; nowadays the name is only applied to a mail steamer belonging to a recognised line—Cunard, White Star, etc.—(Ed.)

head so completely hidden by the huge collar of his monkey jacket that the back view looks as if he had disappeared altogether, and left his cap resting on the collar of his coat.

He also was deep in thought: he was thinking of the deliciously warm hammock out of which he had been turned to walk the deck in this bitter cold. "And I should like to know what good I am," he said, half aloud, "nothing going on, no one on deck. I am sure if Morgan" (this was the officer of the watch) "had any decency he would send me down to turn in again; but he's so strict that it's useless my thinking of it." So with a shiver he turned to walk aft again, when his quick eye saw a signal flying on board the flagship.

It was still too dark to make it out at once, and he stood and peered out of the sternport, and strained his little eyes until he thought—in fact, was almost certain—that it was to the *Strongback*.

The lieutenant was still stalking up and down, chuckling to himself over the sport he intended to have, when a small voice at his elbow said:

"If you please, sir, I think there's a signal to us flying on board the flagship."

"To us, my boy—so early? What can it be?" And then he took a long careful look. "By Jove! you are right, young 'un, and a good useful pair of eyes you have. If I don't mistake, it's something about going to sea: 695, I make it—what say you, Solway?"

"Yes, sir, that's it; I'll run and see what it is." And away he went to look at the signal-book.

"Hoist the answering pendant, quartermaster," cried Morgan. And up went a little red-and-white flag, denoting that we had made it out, and then the first signal was quickly replaced by another.

"Ah, I know that one—it's for the captain to go on board the flagship immediately. Well, Solway, what's the first one?"

"To get up steam with all dispatch, sir," replied the smart little mid. "Shall I tell the chief engineer, sir?"

"Yes, run down; and call the first lieutenant at the same time."

And away they both went, having forgotten all about the cold in the excitement of a change.

Soon every one in the ship was astir, and preparations for getting under weigh were rapidly made.

"It must be something very important for the admiral to bundle us off at a moment's warning like this, and in such weather," remarked Seaton, the first lieutenant, to Morgan, with a shudder as he uttered the last sentence.

"Such weather for woodcock, too," replied Morgan mournfully. "I am always done out of my chance."

"Never mind, Morgan; perhaps we shall have better fun than woodcock shooting after all. Hands shorten in cable!" He concluded his speech with that, and went forward to superintend the work.

It was only natural that every one should be rather excited about this sudden move, as war had just been declared against Russia, and as yet no offensive movement had taken place; it seemed as if the *Strongback* was to open the ball. On such occasions it is a real pleasure to witness the alacrity of the men; they warm to their work, and make light of tasks which are otherwise heavy enough. In less than an hour the steam was reported ready,* and she only waited for the captain to come from the flagship to be off. At last he shoved off, and "up anchor" was the pipe.

"Heave and away, sir," reported the first lieutenant, as the captain came over the side.

"That's right, Seaton; you are always ready. Well, we are off into the Black Sea, and I have sealed orders, not to be opened until we have left this twenty-four hours. You must

* A steamer of those days could not have got up steam in an hour, from cold boilers; but it is reasonable to suppose that, war being declared, she would have her fires "banked," or slacked, and would only have to "draw them forward."

send down top-gallant-masts, and make everything as snug as possible, for we shall have dirty weather outside."

And in truth it required all the *Strongback's* 450 horse-power to force her against the wind, which, as we got into the narrow part of the Bosphorus, came sweeping down as if it was compressed into a funnel; however, we managed it at last, and then, keeping away enough to set some sail, we got along more comfortably.

"Have we got enough stock on board to last till Christmas Day, Snarley?" asked a young midshipman of a rather choleric-looking second-master, who held the thankless office of caterer in the midshipmen's berth; "because, if you haven't, what shall we do?"

"Do! Why go without, you young brat; how on earth could we get anything on board when that inconsiderate old admiral turns us out like this? I say it's a shame," cried he, banging his fist on the table, "and it would serve him jolly well right if we all got the scurvy."

"I don't see that would injure him much," remarked the midshipman.

"What! no fresh grub, Snarley?" There was a chorus of voices from the mids, clerks, etc., seated round the table at breakfast. "Oh! oh! a pretty caterer!"

"You noisy set of young muffs, I'll resign, and leave you to starve," cried Snarley, losing his temper.

"Catch him resigning," remarked a wiry-looking mid, named Walker (who was usually called Hookey), to his neighbour on the right, in a very audible whisper; "the steward wouldn't be so fond of saving him all the tit-bits if he did."

"I'll wring your neck for you, Master Hookey, if you don't mind what you're about," growled Snarley. "Ungrateful beggars—after I got you out of debt!"

"Small blame to you," cried Walker; "you made us pay full mess-money, and gave us nothing but our ship's allowance for it."

What more he would have said no one knows, for the enraged Snarley made a dash along the seats behind the sitters

to get at him, and the wiry mid, saying, "My name's *Walker*," was off like a shot.

From the captain downwards all were in the same predicament; not a live animal or fowl was there on board; and when the orders had been opened, and it was divulged that the ship would be some days out, the *bon-vivants* looked very blue, for this was the 23rd.

Christmas morning found the *Strongback* in a dense fog, the captain and officers anxiously waiting for it to lift a little that the ship's position might be accurately determined, for they knew that they must be very close to Sevastopol, which they had been ordered to reconnoitre as closely as possible. A nasty, disagreeable fog it was, sweeping along the water in its moist unpleasantness, and so cutting from its icy coldness that the men declared it would almost shave one, and jocularly called it the barber.

"I fancy I hear a noise over there, sir," said the sharp mid, whose acquaintance we made in the commencement, to Morgan, at the same time pointing towards the weather quarter. "Listen, sir! There it is again."

Morgan, in company with nearly all the officers, was standing aft, and every ear was on the *qui vive* directly; for all knew that they were not many miles away from their enemy's stronghold, and that they might have a tussle before the day was over.

"There! you must have heard it that time, sir," cried Solway impatiently; "didn't you?"

"I think I did, young 'un," said Morgan, slowly and thoughtfully—"like the dragging of chain, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that's it, sir. Now, listen again, sir," cried Solway eagerly. And in the silence that followed they could distinctly hear a grating sound as if a vessel was at anchor close by, and occasionally tautening her cable as she rose on the swell.

"I'll go and tell the captain," said Morgan, "for if it is a vessel she must be an enemy, and we ought to be ready."

"I hear it distinctly, Morgan," said the captain, on being

told. "Seaton, muster the people quietly at their quarters, load, and run out; mind, no talking, and as little noise with the gun-gear as possible."

While these orders were being carried out, a slight lift in the fog enabled them to distinguish the black hull of a vessel close alongside. It was but a momentary glance, but quite sufficient to enable the many experienced eyes bent that way to detect that it was a small merchant vessel.

"Where on earth have you got to, master?" cried the captain; "we must be right inside the harbour, eh?"

"We must indeed, sir, unless she is waiting, like us, for the fog to clear away. I think that is most likely."

"We'll have a look at her, anyhow; it will pass the time away, at all events. Close her a little, master; send one of the lieutenants in the cutter to board her, Seaton. We will remain close to in the ship."

"I'll go myself, sir, at once," replied Seaton. "Call away the first cutter!" And in a minute or two he had shoved off, and they lost sight of him.

"*Strongback*, ahoy!" came through the fog, in his hearty, cheery voice. "I have taken possession of a Russian schooner."

"What is her cargo?" asked the captain.

"Christmas luxuries for the garrison of Sevastopol, sent by Prince Woronzov—very deeply laden, and only waiting for the fog to clear away to enter the harbour."

A suppressed cheer hailed the glorious announcement.

"What a dinner we will have, eh, Snarley?" whispered Walker. "This will save you a cobbing, for we'd have had you across the table to a dead certainty, if we'd had to sit down to ship's grub on Christmas Day."

"It's lucky for you the captain's looking this way, you impertinent young beggar; but wait till I catch you below," said Snarley, pale with rage—for the idea of a youngster telling an officer of his standing that they would cob him was a piece of cheek not easily got over.

Walker, however, knowing that he was quite safe under the

captain's eye, was quite indifferent as to the threat, and continued his attacks upon Snarley, much to the amusement of the rest, until it was cut short by a message from the captain that there was too much noise abaft.

In the meantime the ship was being quietly placed alongside the prize, which took some time to do, the fog being so thick. At last she was made fast, and Seaton came on board to tell the captain all about her cargo, and bringing with him a handsome young fellow in a cavalry uniform, who, on being questioned by an interpreter, said that the vessel had been dispatched by the prince to keep up the spirits of the garrison, and that he was in charge.

"Tell him," said the captain, "that our spirits want keeping up as much as theirs, for the larder on board is very low."

"Shall we let the cook of each mess go on board at once and see what they can pick up, as it may clear off at any moment, and we may have to get away?" said Seaton to the captain.

"Yes, do, Seaton, please. What a chance for our fellows!"

Never was an order more readily obeyed, or better carried out, than that which sent some twenty foragers on board the schooner, with leave to take what they liked, except liquor. Turkeys, fowls, hams, tongues, and all kinds of things came pouring on board in bewildering confusion, until the blue-jackets began to get quite dainty, and one fellow, holding up a huge turkey, roared out:

"Haven't you got any sausages on board to match this bird? They don't eat well without 'em"—a remark which, coming from a man who half an hour before would have thought himself fortunate if his dinner had consisted of a piece of junk a little less like horse than usual, was much appreciated.

But this was not to last. Like a huge curtain the fog rolled away, and——

"What's that, master?" cried the captain.

"A frigate, sir, I think."

"So it is, and here's another here. Let go the prize;

bundle that Russian aboard, and tell him we're much obliged for his kindness in giving us a good dinner. I much doubt if we shall eat it aboard here, Seaton," continued he, in a whisper, "for we appear to be in a mess. Luckily they don't expect us, I'll be bound. Hoist the Russian ensign, signalman."

And now all was clear and bright, and within easy gunshot frowned the grim batteries of Sevastopol, not a sign as yet being given that a stranger was so near.

"Now then, Seaton, are all on board? Let go at once—I can't wait any longer."

"Aye, aye, sir! Let go the rope." And off the ship swung, when Walker appeared from some place below in the schooner, with a bottle of champagne in one hand and a ham in the other.

"Jump, Mr. Walker!" shouted Seaton, "or you'll be too late."

And jump he would have, but the Russian soldier, seeing the position of affairs, seized him by the leg, doubtless thinking it would be a fine thing to present an English midshipman to his general. Down came the bottle on his head, and, what between the sham and the real pain, he let go his hold, and Walker made a spring over the side. The ship had gone too far, and he went overboard.

"Stop her, sir!" cried Seaton; "here's Mr. Walker just turned up."

"Stop her," said the captain; "I can't leave him behind. But these few minutes may cost us dear, for they are beginning to see that something's wrong."

"Two large steamers are coming out of the harbour, sir," reported the signal midshipman.

Walker went down and came up again, holding on to his ham like a vice, and, being an excellent swimmer, struck out for the ship.

"A rope here, quick!" cried Seaton. "There, catch hold of that. Do drop that ham, Mr. Walker, and take the rope in both hands, will you?"

"It is such a beauty, sir. There, haul me in—I can hold on."

They hauled him in, still holding on to his ham, and no one could help laughing, though it seemed as if it would turn out no laughing matter, for the schooner had some signal up, and a blank gun was fired by one of the frigates, followed directly by a shotted one across the bows.

"Go on full speed!" shouted the captain. "Now, Mr. Piston, if you don't wish to dine in Sevastopol, you must make the *Strongback* move."

As he spoke, a shot whizzing over the ship seemed to give weight to his words, and the portly Piston, diving down the engine-room ladder, bade them stoke for their lives.

"Those steamers are gaining on us fast, sir," said the master.

"They are, indeed; we shall be out of range of those two frigates in a moment, and then I shan't care so much. They are getting unpleasantly close with their shot."

"Stand by to make sail, Seaton; it is our only chance to bear up across this fellow's bows, and see if we can get away under steam and sail."

"Two more steamers coming out, sir."

"By Jove! This is beginning to look serious," said the captain, "especially if the *Vladimir* is one of them. She steams very well, and if we stop and fight her, the others will come up, and then our Christmas dinner will look foolish."

The *Strongback* was now going along at a great pace with every stitch of canvas spread, and the long trail of dense black smoke showed that they were fully alive to the necessity of keeping the steam up below.

Slowly a large, two-funnelled steamer drew ahead of the other three, and evidently gained on the English steamer. The Russians also had all their sails set, and had the prize been anything but themselves, the *Strongbacks* would have enjoyed the exciting race immensely; as it was, it was getting too close to be pleasant.

"That two-funnelled one is nearly within range now, sir," said the lieutenant in charge of the after-gun.

"Very well, Leslie; try a shot directly, and aim at his spars."

"Aye, aye, sir! Extreme elevation, and lay for that steamer's foremast," said Leslie to the captain of the gun, who was only too glad of a chance to distinguish himself, and was ready to fire in a marvellously short time.

"All ready?" asked Leslie.

"All ready, sir."

A short pause, and then a kind of sigh burst from most of the onlookers as the splash of the shot rose high in the air about four or five hundred yards short.

"Load again—she's nearing us," said the excited lieutenant.

A puff of white smoke from her bows, a rushing sound, and a disturbance in the water about two hundred yards astern of the *Strongback* showed that she was in no small peril.

The situation was becoming serious. The *Vladimir*—for she it was—was gaining rapidly; her consorts were not far behind, and the shot came nearer and nearer. Already two or three had passed through the *Strongback's* sails, and if a spar should be struck, capture seemed inevitable. No wonder, then, that everybody watched with intense anxiety each shot from their own gun and a hearty cheer broke from the whole crew when, on the smoke clearing away, a mass of spars and sails was seen lying over the Russian's bows; her foremast had been shot through, and the strong breeze had assisted its fall.

"We are gaining on her slowly," said the master, after applying his sextant to his eye, and taking the angle for the fiftieth time in the last ten minutes.

"Thank Heaven!" cried the captain. "We are indebted to the man who fired the last shot for our escape. Who fired the last shot, Leslie?—the captain of the gun?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well done! Go on."

Another cheer from the *Strongback* as one of their shot

S. S.

evidently took effect on the *Vladimir's* paddle-wheel, for she stopped, signalled to the others, and, firing a few parting shot, turned round and went back with her consorts.

"Well—that was a narrow squeak!" said the captain, gleefully rubbing his hands as he came aft; "but we shall have a Russian dinner for all that, eh? Who is the captain of the gun that fired the lucky shot?"

"Igham, sir," replied the captain's coxswain, who was second captain.

"No, no, George—who is the captain of the gun?"

"Igham, sir."

"You are, eh? Then you fired, eh?"

"No, sir—Igham."

"Botheration!" exclaimed the captain, getting irritated; "I want to know who is the captain of this gun?"

He, as it happened, was away, and the bewildered Number Two once more stammered out:

"Igham, sir."

"The man's a maniac!" roared the captain. "Who is it, Mr. Leslie?"

"Corporal Higham, sir."

There was a burst of laughter, in which none joined more heartily than the captain himself as he gave half a sovereign to Leslie for the corporal. The assembly then broke up, wishing each other the compliments of the season, with a heartiness not usual on these occasions.

And right merrily they kept up that Christmas in the Black Sea, though it promised at one time to end so mournfully.

CAPTAIN BOB GILROY AND THE TREASURE

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

CAPTAIN GILROY and his crew were getting very tired of the Gulf of Mexico, to which, as I told you, he had been banished for an extra long period, as a punishment for getting his ship on shore while chasing an imaginary slaver. He took care not to let his imagination run away with him again—not that there is much in the Gulf to excite the imagination. They spent their time rolling in the swell off the Rio Grande or Tampico, or at the anchorage inside Sacrificios Island, where some of the officers picked up flint arrow-heads and knives, made by the original inhabitants, which afforded subject of conversation—but it was not very exciting.

The time was, however, drawing to a close. The admiral was merciful, and intimated that he was going to let Bob off some of that twelve months, and one fine day a large sail was sighted to the eastward, over the lines of white breakers for ever bursting on the coral reefs, and proved to be the *Jaguar's* relief.

The captain brought orders for the *Jaguar* to go to Havana, and thence to Port Royal; after which, Bob Gilroy fondly hoped, he would be sent north as the summer approached to enjoy the delights of Halifax.

Now, this order to call at Havana, which Gilroy had half-expected, happened to suit his plans very well, for he had just been informed by the consul at Vera Cruz that a certain

wealthy Spanish firm wished to send a quantity of specie to Havana, and would very gladly entrust it to the captain of a British man-of-war. There were some hundreds of thousands of dollars, neatly packed in strong iron-bound boxes, awaiting shipment at Tampico up the coast, and a certain percentage would find its way into the captain's pocket upon safe delivery of the treasure—amounting, perhaps, to three or four hundred pounds.

Bob Gilroy thought he might very well go to Havana by way of Tampico, which would only make a difference of a day or two, and excuse himself, if excuse were called for, by pointing out that he had not visited Tampico for a long time, and thought it better to call there on his way.

Accordingly, he joyfully turned over the important post of "Senior officer in the Gulf" to his brother-captain, and sailed northward, arriving off Tampico on the following day, and perhaps, in his zeal to avoid waste of time on his trip to Cuba, he used coal a little more freely than was quite warrantable. Admirals were apt to ask searching questions in those days about the expenditure of coal; the ship's log and the engine-room register had to be submitted periodically for inspection, and told their own tale.

Tampico, especially at this season of the year—the end of February—is what you might call a chancy sort of place to lie off. It is an open anchorage, with no sort of harbour or bay, and there is the Tampico river, with a nasty bar, upon which sometimes there is a tremendous surf, rendering communication with the shore impossible for a day or two at a time. Moreover, the water is not very deep, and shoals gradually towards the shore, so that, when an extra heavy swell is rolling in, it sometimes breaks considerably outside the bar; and there is no more awful and dangerous thing in the way of a roller than one which breaks, occasionally and unexpectedly, in comparatively deep water.

Gilroy was surprised, upon arrival, to find a very smart and handsome French gun-vessel rolling joyfully at the anchorage, not being aware that the French consul had also been made

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acquainted with the treasure business, and had very naturally given his countryman a hint about it.

However, the French commander politely called upon Bob Gilroy, who scarcely understood a word of French, while the Frenchman's knowledge of the English language was decidedly elementary ; so their conversation was conducted with some difficulty, and they altogether avoided the subject of treasure.

Bob, however, upon consideration, began to have some misgivings about the Frenchman's business there, and, as there was but little swell on, he got his anchor up next morning and shifted further inshore, by way of being more handy for shipping the dollars. Bob had rather a poor opinion of the seamanlike capacity and intelligence of Frenchmen, being a very thorough specimen of a John Bull, and he thought he would "show this Froggy a move."

He sent the cutter in over the bar, which was smooth enough just then, with an intimation to the Spaniard that he was quite ready to take the specie on board at once, and received a reply that it would be sent off in a barge next morning. The boatswain was instructed to make a strong rope net to hold a couple of treasure-boxes at a time, this being the safest method of hoisting in such precious stuff, and all was in readiness for the operation.

However, during the night a considerable swell commenced to roll in, and both the vessels cut a pretty caper, rolling heavily at their anchors. A current set along the shore, which, keeping them broadside on to the swell, did not by any means improve matters.

When daylight came, the prospect was decidedly unpleasant ; the swell was rapidly increasing, and there was not too much water under the *Jaguar's* bottom—the swell, moreover, was probably a sign of the approach of a norther, and you can't lie off Tampico in one of these gales without considerable risk of coming to grief.

The navigator, a cautious man, suggested to the captain that it would be wise to shift further out ; the swell was

getting decidedly short and steep, and the *Jaguar* was rolling far more violently than the French vessel, some distance outside her.

But Bob Gilroy could not brook the notion of having to knuckle under, when he had resolved to show Froggy a trick or two, and he determined to hold on a bit, in the hope that the swell might subside, or that the Mexican boatmen, skilled in negotiating the bar, might yet succeed in bringing out the stuff—which they certainly had not the smallest notion of attempting, for the seas were now thundering on the bar in fine style, a cloud of white spray hanging over it.

About noon, however, Bob got such a strong hint to be on the move, that he could not afford to disregard it.

A heavier sea than usual came suddenly quite steeply athwart the ship; it looked like a wall of water, and caused her to lurch in a fashion that woke every one up. The men ran on deck, looking aft to see what the skipper was going to do; then came another, even worse, and this time it "topped" and developed a decided crest, rushing in towards the shore, not so very far inside the ship.

Then there was a scrimmage.

"Hands up anchor!"

The ship's company, sufficiently alarmed, raced to their stations: the engineers "stoked up" the fires until the steam was blowing off in a great cloud; the carpenters rigged the capstan in a hurry, keeping their feet with difficulty, the big capstan bars sometimes escaping their grasp and tumbling across the deck; the gunner and his mates ran about putting extra tackles on the guns.

"Better slip the cable, sir," said the first lieutenant; "they'll not be able to stand to the capstan, and she'll be taking the ground."

There was no doubt about it; the *Jaguar* was in extreme jeopardy, and the order was given to slip the cable.*

* The chain cables in the Navy are made in lengths of seventy-five feet, joined together by shackles. In order to "slip" the cable, a short piece of chain, with a slip at the end, is put on to take the strain while the shackle

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It could not be done as quickly as could be wished: the pin of the shackle-bolt refused to come out at first, and messengers came running and stumbling forward to know if they were ready to slip; the seas were breaking uncomfortably close, and every one expected to feel the ship bump any moment.

"All ready, sir!" at length cried the lieutenant in charge of the cables.

"Slip, then!—slip!" yelled Bob Gilroy from the bridge; he was calculating his chances of being tried by court-martial—and a sorry figure he would have cut!

A blow of the blacksmith's hammer, and the cable flew out. The engines were put at full-speed ahead, the helm hard over, and the *Jaguar*, rising on a steep sea, came round with her head off shore, and plunged deeply in the trough; then she slowly gathered way, and steamed off-shore, having had as narrow a shave of disaster as any one could wish. How near her keel came to the bottom as she dropped down each time no one could, of course, tell to a nicety, but it must have been precious close.

The wind was already blowing up in squalls from N.N.W. as they steamed out past the French ship. There was no sign of any flurry or excitement on board of her, nor was she, apparently, being got under weigh. The commander, standing on the bridge, saluted Bob Gilroy with characteristic politeness, the latter returning the compliment in bluff, John Bull fashion, while, for some reason best known to himself, he muttered an uncomplimentary remark—when you are annoyed with yourself, it always seems to bring a sort of consolation to swear at somebody else!

next inside it is taken off, leaving a loose end. Then, by knocking off a sliding ring, the slip is freed from the cable, which runs out. There is always a buoy attached to the anchor, which floats so as to indicate where it is. When slipping, it is best, if there is time, to attach the buoy rope to the end of the cable, as this makes it easier to recover the anchor and cable afterwards; but on such an occasion as this it would be left on the anchor.

The *Jaguar* steamed easily out to sea, leaving the long, low, yacht-like French gun-vessel riding easily at her anchor, though she rolled persistently in the swell.

Bob Gilroy had no notion of anchoring again until the breeze was over—he had had a bit of a fright; after getting some distance out into the open gulf, the wind freshening up rapidly into a gale, he laid his ship to on the port tack, steaming easily, with a couple of storm-sails set; and so passed some thirty-six hours, in considerable discomfort, but quite secure from danger. The surface current which runs down with a norther was carrying the ship to the southward, and when the wind subsided, rather suddenly, they were farther from Tampico than they had imagined.

Steaming in, on a fine afternoon, they found the Frenchman still there; the swell had gone down, and it could be seen, as they approached, that the crew were busy, apparently hoisting something in with a tackle on the mainyard.

Gilroy anchored outside the *Apollon*, for that was her name, and presently the French commander came on board, and expressed a hope that his good friend had not suffered much inconvenience from the gale.

Bob Gilroy assured him that he was as jolly as a sand-boy—I hope he did not say “*joli comme un sand-boy*,” but I won’t be sure—disdaining the implication that a British tar should mind a bit of a breeze; then, speaking very slowly, and shouting so as to make the other more readily comprehend:

“You—did—not—go—out?”

“*Moi? mais non—but no*,” said the Frenchman, with an explanatory motion of his hands; “I remain—I have deux ancrés—two anchors—and my—my steam—et voilà—je suis sauf!” And he shrugged his shoulders in a fashion which appeared, to the over-sensitive imagination of Bob Gilroy, to indicate a polite contempt for any one who would run away from his anchorage under the circumstances.

It was perfectly true—the norther was not a very bad one, and the *Apollon*, with two anchors down, and steaming to ease her cables, had ridden it out.

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"Now," concluded the Frenchman, "I take—some—some specie—beaucoup d'argent—you understand? I go to Havana."

Bob quite understood—they were hoisting in the dollars! The Froggy had shown *him* a move!

The pinnacle was hoisted out to go in and find the anchor buoy, and "creep" for the end of the cable—that is, drag a small four-pointed sort of anchor along the bottom, until they hooked it and pulled it up to the surface, when a stout rope was made fast to it, and passed into the ship when she moved in.

All this takes time, and meanwhile they saw the empty Mexican barge pulling on shore, while the *Apollon* weighed and steamed away to the eastward.

Bob Gilroy thus lost several days and the treasure into the bargain. He did not find the admiral at Port Royal, but there received orders to join him at Bermuda, calling at the Windward Islands on the way; and so, after a refit at Port Royal, he started in obedience to his instructions, rather dreading what the admiral would say to him when he had seen the extract from the log and the engine-room register.

Poor Bob, however, was not destined, as we shall see, to reach Bermuda.

THE ADMIRAL'S LITTLE SCARE

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

THE flagship—I should say the British flagship, carrying the flag of the Commander-in-Chief on the China Station—lay moored in the beautiful harbour of Nagasaki. It was a warm, still summer night, a light breeze coming up from seaward—very welcome after the heat of the day. From seaward—but, unless you knew the place, you would not readily guess in which direction lay the entrance to the harbour. From where the flagship lay, it appeared to be entirely landlocked.

A very beautiful harbour, as you would agree, if you had been there; and in those days—I am speaking of nearly forty years ago—the officers of the flagship, I am afraid, led a very lazy life there. As for the flagship herself—well, she was an ironclad of sorts, according to the enlightenment of that period, and perhaps more than a trifle behindhand even then. But she was a roomy, comfortable craft, with, of course, big spars whereon to set a huge spread of canvas in time of peace, but which would be landed at the dockyard or hove overboard in case of war—all according to the fashion of the times. There was one other British man-of-war in the harbour—scarcely a man-of-war, for she was in fact styled a dispatch vessel, and her office was to act as a yacht for the admiral. She arrived that afternoon, and had been ordered to keep her fires alight. The *Marathon* was a very natty-looking little craft—a paddler, with quite a decent turn of speed.

The admiral and his staff had dined, and were enjoying their cigars in the stern-walk—that sort of gallery which ran

round the stern of old wooden ships of the line, and which was adopted in the earlier ironclads. The admiral was a good-natured but somewhat fussy old gentleman, usually very kind and mild-mannered, but liable to occasional fits of—well, smartness, which took the form of finding fault with everybody all round, and insisting upon having his own way, right or wrong—if an admiral can be wrong. His staff—the captain, secretary, and flag-lieutenant—knew their chief very well, and took care to humour him, so that they might have an easy time—which they did, messing at the admiral's expense, and generally enjoying life.

A great peace reigned in the stern-walk, whence the fragrance of very good cigars floated up the harbour; but it was suddenly broken in upon by an officer, a lieutenant, who crossed the cabin with a brisk and important step, as of one who brings tidings.

"There's a vessel somewhere outside firing minute guns, sir," he reported; "at least, the intervals are very irregular, but I suppose they must be intended for signals of distress."

"Bless my soul!" said the admiral—this was his customary exclamation, except when he was seized with a fit of smartness—and he rose and walked to the projecting extremity of the stern-walk, whence he could look along the ship's side, and see more or less ahead. His subordinates maintained a deferential silence while he listened intently.

Boom!—boom! They all heard it—guns, no doubt, at a considerable distance.

"Bless my soul!" reiterated the admiral; and then he led the way on deck, followed by the flag-captain, the secretary, the flag-lieutenant, and the officer of the watch. On the poop they all listened again.

Boom! then a long interval—then boom!—boom! in rapid succession.

"Very odd way of firing, sir," said the flag-captain.

"Some merchant vessel, probably," said the admiral. "Signal to the *Marathon* to get up steam, and shorten in cable immediately."

The *Marathon* was very close to the flagship, and might readily have been hailed. However, the signal lantern "winked" at her rapidly, and there was immediately an obvious stir on board. The officer in charge was a sub-lieutenant, the lieutenant who commanded her being at that moment engaged in a game of pool at the club on shore, together with his navigator. As they were both adepts, and were pocketing a nice little harvest of sixpenny "lives," the breathless messenger was particularly unwelcome. However, they put up their cues quickly enough, and arrived on board just as the admiral's barge shoved off from the flagship.

The *Marathon* was by this time blowing off steam, her fires having been well "forward" when the signal was made.

"Where's Mr. Drake?" inquired the admiral, as he stepped on deck, followed by his two executive attendants.

"He's just changing, sir," replied the sub-lieutenant; "he was on shore——"

"Is steam ready?"

"Yes, sir—and she's hove short."

"Did you hear those guns outside the harbour?"

"Guns, sir? No, sir; I've not heard any guns. Quarter-master! Have you heard any guns outside?"

"No, sir."

"Bless my soul! Oh! Mr. Drake, there's some vessel in distress outside, firing guns. Get underway at once, please, and proceed outside."

"Aye, aye, sir! Hands up anchor!"

There was too much bustle on board the dispatch-boat to admit of the faint detonations being audible, and the loud thud and splash of the paddle-wheels, as she went down the harbour at three-quarter's speed, had a similar effect in drowning all distant sounds.

It was a beautiful night for a little excursion afloat, and the members of the staff, though they were surprised by their chief going out in person, were not at all averse to this break in the comparative monotony of their lives; and, of course, every soul on board was keenly interested in the distressed vessel.

The admiral and the officers on the bridge, the signalman with his glass glued to his eye—though it was of little or no use at night—and all the crew clustered on the forecastle, were eagerly gazing ahead as the harbour's mouth opened out.

There was no view of the open sea, however, until the narrow entrance, only a quarter of a mile in width, had been passed, and the course directed westward between the outlying islands; but the whole distance was only three miles—sea miles, that is to say—and the *Marathon* did not take long to negotiate it, passing on the starboard hand the islet, with precipitous sides, whence, in former times of religious intolerance, Japanese Christians were hurled, to be shattered on the sharp rocks and washed away when the tide rose.

Out into the open steamed the *Marathon*. The watchers beheld the dark, clear-cut sea horizon stretching across the vessel's course. On either side the islands and coast-line were plainly visible; but no sign of any vessel—not so much as a native junk or fishing-boat.

"Stop the engines, Mr. Drake," said the admiral; and after a minute or two, as the vessel lost her way, complete silence reigned.

It was unbroken—not a sound. The reports, which should now have been much more loud and distinct, came not.

This was very disappointing. When an admiral goes out, all in a hurry, to succour fellow-creatures who are in imminent peril, it is distinctly disconcerting to find no trace of them.

"Bless my soul!" said the admiral, "she must have got on one of these islands or shoals. Make more offing, Mr. Drake, and we'll search them."

This was all very well; but the coast round there is decidedly a dangerous one to search, and the survey in those days was not as accurate as it is now. However, the engines were put ahead, and, under the careful eye of the navigator, the *Marathon* circled round to the southward, then recrossed the entrance of the harbour, and coasted on the other side. Not a sign—not a sound.

"Perhaps she's got off again, sir," said the flag-captain.

"Or gone down," said the admiral, who was determined to have a disaster of some sort; "we can go closer in than this, can't we, Mr. Searle?" he asked the navigator—a young man, of the rank of sub-lieutenant, but careful and knowledgeable withal.

"Yes, sir—a little—but it's not very safe at night; this coast has not been very thoroughly surveyed, and the charts are under revision now."

"Well, take her in, and have a look in at these inlets. I'll be responsible."

This was comforting, especially as the other officers were all within ear-shot.

Proceeding at slow speed, the *Marathon* crept along the coast, and poked her nose into several snug little coves and straits—all plentifully strewn with rocky shoals, as the navigator was well aware.

Some fishermen were discovered in one of these, and Lieutenant Drake aired his best Japanese in interrogation of them. His vocabulary was, however, decidedly limited, and discounted further by the fact that several words which he imagined to be pure Japanese were nothing of the kind. Educated Japanese used to style the lingo spoken by Englishmen at that time "Yokohama language!"

"Funi—sarampan?" was the staple query of Lieutenant Drake; the Japanese equivalent, as he imagined, of "ship-mashed?" And this query invariably evoked a fluent but unintelligible response, accentuated by emphatic gestures, the significance of which was not immediately apparent.

A practical interpretation was, however, soon afforded; for the *Marathon*, lying with her engines stopped in the jaws of a narrow creek, suddenly quivered fore and aft, then bumped unmistakably in the slight swell.

"Bless my soul!" said the admiral, who had not bargained for firing minute guns on his own account.

"Full speed astern!" said Drake; and the vessel obeyed the impulse of her engines, but it was quite obvious that she dragged along upon a very hard bottom before she was clear—

and thin, iron plates will not stand much of that sort of treatment.

The fishermen had evidently been warning them of danger—it was their own “funi” which was in peril of “sarampan!”

The carpenter's mate, being sent below to investigate, reported that the ship was making a little water; so, with the steam-pump going, she was headed up the harbour again, and presently anchored in her old berth.

The admiral, feeling rather small, returned to the flag-ship; it was then past midnight, and the officer of the watch reported that the mysterious signals had continued, in the same irregular fashion, but quite distinct, until about half-past nine. Nothing had since been heard, so they all turned in.

It became necessary on the following day to obtain permission from the Japanese authorities to dock the *Marathon*, and the admiral blessed his soul very heartily over the business, while the navigator congratulated himself upon the fact that he had at any rate stranded his ship, as he put it, “by act of parliament.”

It was a calm, hot day on the morrow, and there was a great stillness on deck after the flag-ship's crew had been piped to dinner at noon.

About twenty minutes later, the officer of the watch, standing in the “dickey,” or small projecting lookout-place on the poop, suddenly heard the guns again—boom!—a considerable pause—boom! boom! boom! in rapid succession. The crew were coming on deck to smoke; one man was standing by the fore-bitts, rubbing his great toe and using strong language.

“Bless that bally old tank!” he said; “why couldn't they land it clear of the hatchway?”

Boom! boom!

The officer of the watch, from his position in the starboard dickey, could see the fore-hatchway; and immediately in front of it was a square iron tank, which, with some others, had been got on deck a day or two previously, in order to get at some portion of the hold for cleansing purposes.

The men came up in twos and threes; and several

accidentally kicked the tank with their bare feet as they stepped over the high "coaming" of the hatchway.

Boom ! boom ! boom !

The men sometimes rubbed their toes and obviously swore—this would be immediately after a somewhat louder "gun" than usual.

And then the officer of the watch suddenly leaned over the rail in a convulsion of uncontrollable merriment; and upon his relief, who appeared punctually at half-past twelve, interrogating him as to the occasion of this outburst, he took him by the arm and marched him to the dickey.

"Listen !"

The other listened, and looked—then he in his turn shook with laughter; and neither of them noticed the admiral for a moment or two—he had come on deck for a little fresh air before lunch. He was, as has been remarked, a kindly old boy, and smiled in sympathy with the obvious delight of his two subordinates.

"What's the joke, Mr. Pearson?" he inquired, good humouredly, as he returned their salute at the top of the poop ladder.

Pearson was not game to enlighten him, but the other, who had been officer of the first watch on the previous night, and had reported the "minute guns," was not so reticent.

The admiral was inducted into the dickey—listened—looked.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed; and promptly retired below.

The British taxpayer, of course, bore the expense of the repairs to the *Marathon's* bottom; but the admiral found himself unable to enjoy the joke, and it was "taboo" in the cabin for ever.

The story, of course, got about like wildfire among the ship's company; and though the tank was promptly shifted, as long as it remained on deck men were constantly running against it, or banging it with their fists.

The cessation of the "minute guns" about half-past nine was easily accounted for—at that hour the men were "piped down," and the upper deck was cleared, save for a man or two on duty.

It was somewhat rough on the admiral that a songster on the forecastle should have selected, as his contribution at a "sing-song" on the following night, "The Minute Gun at Sea." The chorus was sung with great force and finish, with a running "obligato" on the tank!

NOTE.—This story is founded upon fact, in so far that on board the British flagship, in Nagasaki harbour, many years ago, the accidental kicking of an iron tank, in the manner described, was actually mistaken for distant guns. No vessel was sent out to find the imaginary ship in distress, but there was quite a little excitement about it, and the origin of the alarm was not discovered until the following day. The ship's head pointed seaward, and to those on the poop the effect produced was precisely that of the report of distant guns.

THE FIGHT IN FATSHAN CREEK

EVERY boy has heard of Lord Howe's great fight and victory on the 1st of June, 1794; a day commonly alluded to, in consequence, as "The glorious first of June."

Perhaps, however, you may not have heard much about another first of June fight, sixty-three years later, of which there must still be a good many survivors—officers, seamen, and marines—though these will be far advanced in years. This fight was a very different affair from Lord Howe's, nor had it any great international importance; but opportunity was afforded, and amply utilised, for the display of immense pluck and pertinacity on the part of British officers and bluejackets; and I have, indeed, heard an enthusiastic survivor, on the anniversary, allude to it as "Fatshan Day—the glorious first of June!" ignoring the great victory of 1794, which may be pardoned, perhaps, in one who was a bluejacket at the time, and probably very uninstructed in the matter of naval history.*

In the year 1856, the Chinese authorities displayed a very truculent and aggressive spirit towards Englishmen and other foreigners, with whom, however, they had, some fifteen years previously, made certain treaties.

I am not going into the question of our wars with China, concerning which there has always been considerable difference of opinion, which does not much affect the conduct of naval officers, who usually acted under general directions from responsible ambassadors or other representatives of home authority.

* Another "first of June" was the day upon which, in 1813, the historic encounter took place between the *Shannon* and *Chesapeake*.

The incident which brought about a state of war in 1856 was the unprovoked seizure of a vessel under British colours and the abduction of her crew.

Then followed representations, demands, obduracy of the Chinese, and finally warlike operations to obtain redress and submission; and for the following six months Canton River was the scene of many encounters between our smaller men-of-war and Chinese junks and forts.

Canton River is a perfect labyrinth of creeks and channels, affording immense advantages to defenders, and the Chinese were not slow to avail themselves of their chances. They gave our people a very harassing time, but the sailors pegged away, seizing and disarming forts and batteries, sinking and burning war-junks, while the diplomatic representative kept on hammering into the Chinese High Commissioner, Yeh, that he had far better give in at once with a good grace, as he would have to do so in the long run. But Yeh was a very obstinate person, with all a Chinaman's contempt of "foreign devils," as they politely styled Europeans, and in May, 1857, he was as far as ever from "climbing down."

At that time a number of war-junks—pretty nearly one hundred of them—driven from one passage to another by the persistent attacks of our gunboats, supplemented by rowing-boats where the water was too shallow for the former, had been moored in Fatshan Creek, lying to the south-east of the city of Canton, where they imagined that they were perfectly secure; so here they lay, awaiting opportunity to sally forth and do more mischief to the foreign devils.

The British Admiral, Sir Michael Seymour, was not disposed, however, to permit them to imagine that they were anywhere safe from attack, and on the last two days of May a force was assembled to deal with them. No large vessels, regular men-of-war, could approach the position, and it was not expected that the smaller vessels would be able to get very close to the junks. The creek was not surveyed at that time, and the depth of water was uncertain.

Two small paddle-steamers, the *Coromandel* and *Hong-*

Kong, were employed, together with seven gunboats—vessels which had been, practically, invented on purpose for Chinese warfare, and known among naval men as “sixty horse-power gunboats” for many years afterwards*—and, in tow of the steam vessels, a great flotilla of boats from various men-of-war, each with a gun or rocket-tube, according to its size, and a full crew of bluejackets and marines, armed with rifles and cutlasses.

Before they could come to close quarters with the junks, however, there were some preliminary difficulties to be encountered. Some distance below the junks the creek is divided by Hyacinth Island, and just abreast of this was a fort on a hill. It would never do to leave this work in our rear, so the first business of the day was to take it.

Commodore the Hon. Henry (afterwards so well known as Admiral Sir H.) Keppel commanded the up-river business, flying his commodore’s pendant on board the *Hong-Kong*, which was a river steamer turned into a man-of-war, and drew less water than the gunboats. Keppel had had the misfortune, a few weeks previously, to lose his ship, the *Raleigh*, by striking on a sunken rock. While he was running her for a mud bank, in order to beach her before she sank under him, a French squadron with an admiral’s flag flying was discerned in the distance; Keppel, courteous and cool to admiration, fired a salute to his French superior, the foremost guns of his own ship being then very nearly flush with the water! This was the kind of man he was, and naturally all hands would follow where he would lead.

On the 31st he made a reconnaissance in the steamer to see the lie of the land; the preparations were complete for an attack at daybreak on the 1st of June. Here is an account, from a midshipman, of that night:

“After supper on the night of the 31st we all lay down in our boats, or on the decks of the gunboats, to get some sleep.

* One of these vessels, the *Skylark*, was attached to the *Excellent*, gunnery ship, at Portsmouth, for target practice at Spithead, twenty years later, having a couple of more or less modern guns mounted.

The gunboats were anchored, with boats all lying in single file astern. It was a lovely calm night, and pretty hot; and, beyond the noise of frogs on the banks and a few nightbirds parading about, there was little sound to be heard. We did ourselves as well as we could, some snoozing, others smoking, spinning yarns, discussing eventualities, and no doubt many minds with their thoughts far away. Those who have gone through the eve of an action know too well the many things that run in the mind."

Thus writes Rear-Admiral the Hon. Victor Montagu, in "A Middy's Recollections," published forty-one years later.

He and his shipmates were not, however, permitted a very long night in which to indulge their reflections.

At half-past three, considerably before the approach of dawn, the men were getting into the boats, the gunboats weighing their anchors. The admiral, in the *Coromandel*, led the way, followed by the *Haughty* gunboat, having in tow the party destined for the attack on the fort abreast of Hyacinth Island.

Sir Michael Seymour's orders were that, as soon as the attacking party were seen ascending the hill, the remainder should immediately press on for the junks; if the gunboats grounded, the boats were to proceed alone, and carry the junks by boarding.

It must not be imagined for a moment that the Chinese were caught napping; they were wide awake to the whole business, and before the *Coromandel* got near the fort, she struck upon a submerged junk, filled with stones. Several obstructions were placed in the creek, and the wily Chinamen always had their guns laid for the spot, so as to make it hot for us. They immediately opened fire. The landing-party pushed on shore, day having just broken, and in a very few minutes were seen climbing the hill, under a hot fire, towards the fort—which they easily captured, the *Haughty* putting in her shell over their heads.

This was the signal for Keppel to advance with his flotilla on the further side of the island; and we may be sure that no time was lost.

The great fleet of junks, most judiciously placed to command the passage, opened a tremendous fire; they were armed with 32-pounders and smaller guns, and plenty of them, and they had the range to a T as our vessels advanced. The gunboats plied their guns vigorously, still towing the boats filled with men for the final assault; but before they could get to close quarters, one after another went bump on the ground—the *Hong-Kong* alone being able to pursue her way.

But the boats' crews were ready, every oar to hand, and instantly they shoved off and raced for the junks, the commodore leading the way in his six-oared galley.

Vice-Admiral Sir W. R. Kennedy, then a midshipman, was in the pinnacle of the *Calcutta* (Seymour's flagship), and thus describes the onslaught:

"The boats shoved off, and with a rattling cheer made a dash for the junks under a terrific fire of round-shot, grape, canister, scrap-iron, and bags of nails. Fortunately for us the space to be traversed was only a few hundred yards, otherwise not a soul could have lived through it. As it was, every boat was struck in several places, and many a poor fellow lost the number of his mess in those few minutes. The water was ploughed up by the storm of shot, and the air whistled with the hail of grape and canister. However, before the Chinamen could reload we were alongside. Without waiting to drop the netting and spear us like eels in the meshes, they jumped overboard on one side as we clambered up on the other, and the first lot of eighty junks was ours."

The tide was rising, and the *Hong-Kong* and her consorts were able, alternately steaming ahead and grounding, to get a little nearer before the first part of the affair was over; the *Hong-Kong*, however, got into a very hot corner, and was heavily punished.

The captured junks were soon in a blaze, the British having no use for such prizes; but they had not yet finished with the business, and the hottest part was to come. A little



From a lithograph, after a drawing by O. W. Brierly, by permission of "Country Life," Ltd.

THE FIGHT IN FATSCHAN CREEK.
Keppel's boat is sunk under him.



higher up there were twenty more junks to be tackled, and Keppel, calling upon the boats to follow him, again led the way.

For a while not a shot was fired on either side—were the British going to have a walk-over? It appeared so, until the boats, racing for the post of honour as in a regatta, came within about four hundred yards of the junks; then they suddenly and unexpectedly grounded, either upon a natural bar, or upon a barrier purposely interposed by the enemy—whichever it was, the Chinamen knew precisely what was going to happen, and had every gun pointed dead for that spot, over two hundred guns in all, loaded with the sort of stuff Admiral Kennedy describes in the passage already quoted.

Then followed an awful quarter of an hour. Amidst the terrific hail of iron, boats were aground, broadside on, huddled together, trying to get afloat, the shot crashing into them, sweeping away the oars, men falling fast; not a shot could be returned. Keppel says:

“We cheered and tried to get on, when a shot struck my boat right amidships, cut one man in two, and took off the arm of another. Prince Victor,* who was with me, jumped forward to tie up his arm with his neckcloth. While he was doing so, another round shot passed through both sides of the boat, wounding two others in its passage. The boat was now filling with water, and I got on one of the seats to keep my legs out of the water, and just after stepping up a third shot went through both sides of the boat not more than an inch below the seat on which I was standing. Many of our boats now got huddled together, the oars of most being shot away. A boat of the *Calcutta* being nearest, I jumped into

* Better known in the navy as Count Gleichen—he was a nephew of Queen Victoria—he died a retired Vice-Admiral in 1891. Keppel says: “Took with me Prince Victor of Hohenlohe, having previously been commanded by Her Majesty to take every care of him.” So he took him into the thickest of the fight, assuming that this was the kind of “care” which would be most appreciated.

her, pulling our wounded men with us; my dog Mike refusing to leave the dead body of the man who was his favourite, we were obliged to leave him. I then gave the order to retire on the *Hong-Kong*, and form abreast of her. While we were going down, a shot cut away all the oars on one side. I called to Lieutenant Graham to get his boat ready, as I would hoist my broad pendant and lead the next attack in his boat. I had no sooner spoken to him than a shot disabled his boat, wounding him and killing and wounding four others. I saw Graham one mass of blood, but it was from a marine who stood next him, and part of whose skull was forced three inches into another man's shoulder. When I reached the *Hong-Kong*, the whole of the enemy's fire seemed centred on her. She was hulled twelve times in a few minutes; her deck was covered with the wounded who had been brought on board from the boats. I was looking at a marine, when a round shot cut him down, and he fell on the wounded. From the paddle-box I saw that our heavy firing was bringing up reinforcements. The account of our having been obliged to retire had reached them, and they were pulling like mad."

Keppel's men were completely done up for the moment—he ordered quinine and ship's biscuit to be served out to them; but before many of them had got their share, the commodore was dancing with excitement on the paddle-box, and shouting, "The beggars are making off! Man the boats!—man the boats!" and shaking his fist at the enemy: "You rascals! I'll make you pay for this!"

Down went biscuit and quinine, and the boats were once more racing for their goal; but they were reinforced—fresh boats, untouched, fresh men at the oars—and the Chinese fire slackened: their great "sweeps" were out, and they were endeavouring to get away. With another cheer, the British dashed on; junk after junk was captured, some being chased for six or seven miles, nearly as far as the city of Fatshan, which was full of troops. So the boats returned, only five or six junks out of one hundred having escaped.

It was half-past three in the afternoon when the boats once more reached the *Hong-Kong*, so that they had been twelve hours at it, with little or no food—rowing hard, fighting desperately, and witnessing numerous incidents as horrifying as that described by Commodore Keppel, to say nothing of the tremendous mental strain which must inevitably accompany such experiences.

Keppel's coxswain, "the faithful Spurier," as he calls him, was desperately wounded in the last assault :

"It was in this last chase that my poor Spurier was shot down by my side. I saw his bowels protruding as he lay in the bottom of the boat, holding my hand. He asked me if I thought there was any hope. I could only say, Where there is life, there is hope. But I had none. Strange to say, the good Crawford sewed him up, and the admiral's last letter from Hong-Kong states that Spurier hoped to return to his duties in a few days. We have a surgeon here who served in the Naval Brigade in the Crimea. He says he never saw such frightful wounds as these Chinese shot appear to make."

No wonder, if they fired, as is stated by Admiral Kennedy, "scrap-iron and bags of nails!" Such missiles would not have been used by Europeans at that time.

The sick and wounded, to the number of nearly fifty, were placed on board the *Hong-Kong* for conveyance to the Naval Hospital at Hong-Kong. She was a small vessel—considerably smaller than an ordinary tug-boat—so there was but poor accommodation for them. Moreover, the vessel was so severely damaged that it appeared doubtful at one time whether she could live to reach her destination.

Admiral Victor Montagu gives some vivid pictures of that return voyage to Hong-Kong.

"Our troubles were not over. A sort of sequel to the fight was going on ; and a most unpleasant one it was. As we proceeded, we passed through the junks which we had taken in the morning, now all on fire ; explosions were going on in all directions, and (which was almost worse) the guns, as they

got hot (pointing in every direction), were continually going off. It was a case of running the gauntlet. How I did watch the muzzles as we passed close by!

"Luckily we were not hit, though our awning caught fire in several places from falling *débris*; and mighty glad was I to find our poor craft clear of all these blazing junks, and once more out of harm's way.

"I had one very close shave during the fighting. (Probably there were plenty of others, unknown to me.) I was standing on the sponson,* helping the wounded up out of the boats, when I heard a devil of a crash close to my head, and, turning round, saw a great bulge and crack in the pantry bulkhead, at the after-end of the paddle-box, exactly in a line with my head. I could not resist the temptation to look round, and in at the door, to see what was wrong; and there I beheld an 18-pound shot still pirouetting round on a shelf on which stood some of our crockery, now all more or less smashed. The missile had gone right through our paddle-box from one end to the other. A few more grains of powder, or one bulk-head less, and my head would have been unshipped to a moral.

"The remembrance of that evening and night, while we were steaming down, is heart-rending. It was dead calm, and the cries of the wounded were unbearable. Many were calling for their relations and friends; others would rise up in their beds, and then throw themselves down in despair. Several times I went on to the sponson to have their piteous cries drowned in the noise of the paddle-wheels.

"Poor fellows, who had been scorched terribly from explosions of boats' magazines,† were enveloped in wadding.

* The flat, projecting platform on either side of the paddle-box, part of which was generally utilised to build a pantry or other structure upon.

† A large box, provided for each boat, containing a complete supply of ammunition, etc., and always kept ready for use in the ship's magazine. If struck by a shot, or a large bullet from a Chinese "jingal," the concussion would probably explode it, right in the middle of the boat's crew.

Some of them sank during the night from exhaustion ; though covered in wadding from head to foot, they found no respite from their agonies. There was a nice young fellow, a mate of the *Tribune*, who had a grape shot through his lungs. It was touching to hear him talking to his coxswain, who knelt by his side, fanning him the while. The chief subject of his conversation was his poor mother. He also sank during the early hours of the morning. . . . I shall never forget that night. I snatched an hour or two's sleep ; but one and all of us did what we could to help the surgeons, and it was a relief when the dead bodies and the wounded were taken out alongside the hospital ship and our decks washed down.

“Again, how extraordinary it was that we had not lost more men! An action like this (I verily believe that during the twelve hours it lasted it could not have been hotter) is a pretty good test of British pluck. I can conscientiously say that I did not see the slightest hesitation in any man from beginning to end. Even when the boats were fairly beaten off, and Keppel had to retire for reinforcements, there was no hurry while retiring. The men paddled back at leisure, and took their licking calmly.”

Such was the fight in Fatshan Creek. Every one who was present agrees that it was one of the hottest boat actions upon record.

Fortunately it was not, as some such desperate attacks have been, without good results. From that time the Chinese began to sing a different tune ; but the war was prolonged, intermittently, for three or four years, and our troops and seamen had one terrible rebuff at the Taku Forts, which, however, is scarcely a sea story.

Perhaps you will say, neither is this one. Well, call it a river story, or a creek story ; it is the relation, at any rate, of doughty deeds done afloat, so let it stand at that.

THE BATTLE OF OBLIGADO

WHILE I think of it, I will give you another "river-story," in which, as at Fatshan, British seamen accomplished a dangerous and difficult task, by the display of great seamanlike skill and indomitable pluck—I should rather say, British and French seamen, for on this occasion the naval force was composed of these two nationalities, and the allies worked together with great harmony and mutual appreciation.

Probably you have never heard of Obligado, and I am afraid it would be of no use for me to refer you to an atlas—at any rate, I have searched in vain for this name in a very fine atlas, with the advantage of knowing precisely where it ought to appear; and in truth, it is not, and never has been, of sufficient importance to render it probable that it would appear in any map, except a chart in detail, constructed on a large scale for the use of seamen—in such charts it does, of course, appear.

However, you will undoubtedly find, in any map of South America, on the east coast, that broad opening the Rio de la Plata, known to British seamen as the "River Plate," on the banks of which are two large cities, Monte Video and Buenos Ayres; and into this broad estuary there flow two rivers—the Uruguay to the northward, and the Parana to the north-west. On the Parana, about eighty-five miles from Buenos Ayres, as the crow flies, but very much farther if you trace the windings of the river, lies Obligado.

This is a part of the world in which, for many years, insurrectionary troubles were rather the rule than the exception;

and in the year 1845 things came to a climax by reason of the doings of one, Don Manuel de Rosas, a man of powerful character, who, among his other operations, thought fit to close the navigation of the Parana.

France and England had, some years previously, had a finger in the pie out there, and had jointly guaranteed the independence of Uruguay (known at that time as Banda Oriental); and so they took upon themselves the task of opening up the Parana river by force—or rather, the naval representatives of the two nations did so, going rather beyond their instructions from home—but I think it is now generally considered that they did right.

Rosas, a very determined man, of whose strong and often cruel proceedings there are many stories told,* resolved that the Parana should not be forcibly opened; the point which he selected to defend was Obligado—and very ably he planned his defence.

The river just there is a short half-mile in width, a strong stream running down; across this narrow waterway were moored a score of small vessels, connected by three chain cables, which stretched from bank to bank—a formidable barrier, which would require to be tackled by hand, in boats, as it would be useless to try to cut the three chains by firing at them. This “boom” was covered by the fire of four

* It was apparently a very perilous matter for a subordinate to incur Rosas' displeasure. Upon one occasion an officer who was going up country politely inquired of his chief whether he could execute any commission for him. “You will pass Fort ——” said Rosas; “will you take this letter to the commandant for me?” “Certainly,” replied the officer. Before starting he met a friend, who said, “Be careful; I hear your name is on the black list.” “Oh no, I have just left Rosas, who was very friendly, and asked me to take a note for him!” “Well, don't take it.” But he would not listen to the advice. On reaching the fort, he handed the letter to the commandant, who read it, and said, “Do you know the contents of this letter?” “No,” replied the officer; “General Rosas asked me to bring it to you.” “Well, look at it!” It read “Shoot him!” And shot he was! This story is told in “Life and Letters of Admiral Sir B. J. Sullivan,” who heard it on the spot.

batteries on the left bank, admirably placed, so as to command the approach of an enemy completely. These batteries, in the construction of which Rosas had the assistance of a skilled Russian engineer, were splendid pieces of work, the thick parapets of solid, rammed clay resisting all the fire of the ships' guns.

Rosas had some three thousand troops there—a mixed lot, including adventurers of all nationalities, not excepting English—and was persuaded that his position was impregnable to any force that was likely to be brought against it. Nor were the British naval officers over-sanguine as to the result.

The best account of the operations is to be found in the "Life and Letters of Admiral Sir Bartholomew J. Sullivan, K.C.B." He was at that time a commander, already of some repute as a skilful seaman and surveyor, and an officer of unbounded zeal and courage. He commanded the *Philomel*, a sailing brig; and very proud he was of his smart little craft, and of the high state of discipline and efficiency of his crew. And she was, indeed, the admiration of the squadron.

Sullivan, in a letter to his father about a fortnight before the attack, deplores the inadequacy of the English force in some respects—they should have had, he says, two hundred and fifty marines from the fleet in addition—the two steam-vessels drew too much water for such a service, the supply of certain kinds of ammunition was very scanty, and so on; and concludes, "I hope the authorities do not despise their enemies, for these people have during the last two years shown such courage and performed such acts of gallantry as have never been excelled."

A very characteristic British weakness, that of despising the enemy! How many times have we suffered severely in consequence! However, the British and French officers, whatever their superiors might think about it, took care to make the most of the material at their disposal.

The combined forces were as follows:

BRITISH

| | TONS. | GUNS. | |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Gorgon</i> (paddle steamer) | 1,111 | 6 | Capt. C. Hotham. |
| <i>Firebrand</i> (ditto) | 1,190 | 6 | Capt. J. Hope. |
| <i>Philomel</i> (brig) | 428 | 8 | Com. B. J. Sullivan. |
| <i>Comus</i> (sloop) | 492 | 18 | Act.-Com. E. A. Inglefield. |
| <i>Dolphin</i> (brigantine) | 318 | 3 | Lieut. R. Levinge. |
| <i>Fanny</i> (schooner or brig?) | — | 1 | Lieut. A. C. Key. |

FRENCH

| | TONS. | GUNS. | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|----------------------|
| <i>San Martin</i> | 200 | 8 | Capt. Tréhouart. |
| <i>Fulton</i> (paddle steamer) | 650 | 2 | Lieut. Mazères. |
| <i>Expéditive</i> | — | 16 | Lieut. De Miniac. |
| <i>Pandour</i> | — | 10 | Lieut. Du Paie. |
| <i>Procida</i> | — | 4 | Lieut. De la Rivière |

The *Fanny* and *San Martin* were prizes from the enemy, whose fleet had been captured some time previously. The *Fanny* is put down in the "Life and Letters" as a schooner; but Lieutenant Key, in a letter written at the time, calls her a brig. She carried only one gun, however, and her crew numbered forty. Key was lent from the *Gorgon* for this little command, having gained a great reputation from the skill he displayed a year previously in getting the *Gorgon* afloat, when she had been blown and washed high and dry in a tremendous gale—indeed, but for his ingenuity and mechanical genius, she would probably never have been recovered.

Well, the allied squadron assembled at Martin Garcia, near the mouth of the Parana, and started up-river on the 8th of November, 1845. As they intended, among other matters, to land and destroy Rosas' batteries, they stopped on the road to exercise the bluejackets in land operations. And Sullivan remarks that, while the French had trained their men at this kind of thing, the British seamen were absolutely hopeless at it, like a flock of sheep, and one ship's company had never been taught how to hold a musket!

However, they contrived in a week or so to lick them into some kind of shape, and on the evening of the 18th of November anchored about two miles below Obligado.

That night Sullivan, a most skilful surveyor and pilot—his brig was, in fact, commissioned chiefly for surveying purposes—proceeded in a boat to reconnoitre and ascertain the depth of water up to the barrier. Lieutenant Mazères, of the *Fulton*, accompanied him, the two boats, with muffled oars, pulling silently up against the stream, and actually sounding so close to the batteries that people could be heard talking on shore. This kind of thing has often been done, though it appears almost incredible that the boats should not be seen and heard by the enemy and fired upon; perhaps it is the very boldness of the enterprise which brings success—nobody is expecting anything so daring. On the night before the Battle of Copenhagen, Captain Thomas Hardy—"Nelson's Hardy"—went away in a dinghy, and sounded within a few yards of the nearest Danish vessel, using a *long pole*, for fear the splash of the lead might betray him!

Sullivan did not apparently, at that time, include a knowledge of the French language among his accomplishments, but a man in the French boat acted as interpreter, and presently, as the boats drew close together, he whispered to Sullivan, "The captain thinks it time to be off." Sullivan thought so too, for lights were seen moving about on shore, and it would have been a pretty hot place if they had been seen; besides, what was the good of gaining valuable information and then getting killed without making use of it? So they prudently returned to their ships.

The 19th was spent in preparing for the attack and reconnoitring the enemy's position, which was indeed a formidably strong one: a war-vessel carrying six guns—the *Republicano*—and two one-gun vessels were moored just above the barrier, in such a position that their guns completely commanded it. There were two things to be done: the barrier had to be removed, and the batteries silenced and rendered useless; navigation could not be reopened until these two things were accomplished. The first business was to bang away at the batteries until their fire slackened or ceased; then some armourers, carried on board the *Dolphin*, were to attack the

chain cables with special tools, in the use of which they had been practised, and sever them. The stream ran down the river with a speed of three or four knots, which rendered it very necessary that the sailing vessels should have a fair wind to carry them up to their stations; it was intended to hold the steamers in reserve until the chains had been cut, and the way cleared for them to steam ahead.

There was, unfortunately, very little wind on the morning of the 20th of November, but at eight o'clock the *Philomel* weighed her anchor, and, in company with the *Fanny*, *Expéditive*, and *Procida*, crawled up towards the defences at the speed of about half a knot over the ground—just able to stem the current.

The *Dolphin* was intended to move up and engage the *Republicano*, while the *Comus*, *San Martin*, and *Pandour* were to anchor opposite the batteries, higher up than the other group of ships.

The first shot was fired from No. 1 battery a little before ten o'clock, the *Philomel* being then within three or four hundred yards. The projectile narrowly missed the ship's hull, passing close over it between the rigging, and bringing down the ensign. This, of course, was speedily rehoisted, and then the whole four batteries opened on the vessel.

That Rosás had some very skilful artillerymen was instantly apparent; moreover, they had tried the range beforehand, and knew it to a hair. Almost immediately a shot crashed into the *Philomel's* bow gun-carriage and slide, sending iron splinters flying—Doyle, the first lieutenant, was rolled over, desperately wounded;* the foretopmast was cut halfway through, obliging them to lower the topsail to save the spar; then down came the maintopsail, and, the ship no longer stemming the current, Sullivan was compelled to anchor, some distance short of his allotted station. Shot came crashing through the bow; one of them struck a fowl-coop, and the fragments of wood and iron littered the deck aft to the wheel. The two French ships in Sullivan's division were

* He died afterwards.

swept astern by the current, but the *Fanny* kept close up, both vessels replying with a steady fire.

Then the *Dolphin*, passing higher up to take her station, came in for the whole fire of the batteries. Lieutenant Levinge stood gallantly on until his sails and halyards were so much cut away that he could make no further progress, when he anchored, keeping up a constant fire from his three guns all the time. In a quarter of an hour he had a score of men killed and wounded, and then Captain Tréhouart, in the *San Martin*, came up and relieved him of some of the enemy's too close attention.

Tréhouart's vessel was also speedily dismantled aloft by the tremendous fire of the batteries, but had sufficient way on, as he hoped, to carry her into the desired position. The enemy, however, decided the question for him, one of their shot cutting away the "stoppers" which secured the anchor on the bow, so down went the anchor. The *Comus* followed closely, but the strong current baffled her commander in his designs, and swept her back some distance.

The gallant Frenchman, Tréhouart, was thus left to bear the brunt of the concentrated fire of the enemy, and the skill of the gunners was proved by the terrible injuries his vessel received. The first three batteries had her on the broadside, No. 4 on the port bow, and the *Republicano* nearly ahead. She was only a small brig, of 200 tons, and the marvel is that she was not sunk in a few minutes. No fewer than thirty-six shot struck her on the port bow—her bow guns, and three broadside guns, were disabled. Nothing daunted, the plucky Frenchman ordered an opposite gun to be shifted over, and this was very smartly accomplished—those who are familiar with such operations will understand what this means under such a fire—but in vain; three men in succession were killed in taking aim before they could fire, and then the gun was dismounted and rolled over, useless. Still Tréhouart held on, and when his cable was shot away, he let go another anchor and brought up again, as Sullivan says, "in a good position," though nearly forty



From a drawing, by permission of "Country Life," Ltd.

THE BATTLE OF OBLIGADO.

Captain James Hope and his party cut the chains.



of his small crew of one hundred men were killed and wounded.

The *Fulton*, steamer, came up at this juncture to assist, and received her full share of shot, her captain bringing her right up within close range.

The steady fire of the allied vessels, maintained in spite of all difficulties, now began to tell on the batteries; and it must have been very well directed, for guns were dismounted in the three nearest, and carts could be seen conveying numbers of wounded to the rear.

The crew of the *Republicano* set their ship on fire, and went on shore to reinforce the gunners in No. 4 battery, which still kept up a damaging fire, and displayed no signs of injury—at a quarter past twelve the vessel blew up.

Now for cutting the chains!

But neither the *Dolphin* nor the *San Martin* had a boat that would swim—and the chain-cutting experts were on board the former. Who was to do it?

Volunteers were not long wanting—Captain James Hope, of the *Firebrand* (later very well known as Admiral Sir James Hope, G.C.B.), immediately manned three of his boats, and, calling alongside the *Dolphin* to pick up the armourers, pulled straight for the barrier, at about the seventh or eighth vessel from one side. With him went Lieutenant Webb, Mr. Nicholson, mate, and Mr. Commerell, midshipman (afterwards Admiral Sir John Commerell, V.C., G.C.B.).

Webb, Nicholson, and Commerell, in the three boats, set to work upon the “riding” cables of three of the vessels—the chains, that is to say, by which they were anchored, bow and stem; while Captain Hope and another party got on board one of them to cut the connecting-chains. The boats were almost entirely protected by the hulls of the vessels, but Hope and his party immediately became a mark for the enemy’s fire. Round and grape-shot hurtled and whistled all round them—the deck was torn and splintered at their very feet; but they marvellously escaped injury, and proceeded calmly with their job, Hope standing over them and superintending, with utter

disregard of danger. He was a tall, splendid-looking man, considerably over six feet in height, and it is said that the General rode furiously to the batteries and offered £200 to the crew of any gun that should bring him down. No doubt they worked hard for it, but they had, from their point of view, no luck. In a few minutes the fine-tempered tools of the armourers had done their work, for chain-cables in those days were relatively small, nor were they made of such a good quality of iron as is now insisted upon. I do not suppose these cables were more than one inch—that is, the iron of which the links were formed was one inch in diameter—if as much. In later times, such obstructions would be severed by means of a “necklace” of gun-cotton, fired with a detonator in connection with an electric battery, which would make very short work of them.

Hope and his men did splendid execution with the means at hand. Suddenly the line of vessels swayed under the force of the current: one swung round leaving a gap, two more followed, and, amid the cheers of the allies, a gangway of one hundred yards or so appeared in the “boom”; navigation was reopened, and the three steamers immediately swept through and delivered a hot flanking fire on the batteries.

The game was up—so thought Rosas’ men, who were mostly pressed into this service, and had no idea of coming to close quarters. If he had had a thousand or two of the same stamp as the gunners, the British and French would even then have had their work cut out for them—more than they could have tackled, in fact; but only a comparatively small number stood their ground, and Captain Hotham, in command, after holding a council of war, determined to land his men and spike the guns on shore.

The gallant Tréhouart declared at first that he could spare no men for the job out of his sorely reduced ship’s company, but he contrived to find some, after all, and a force of 180 seamen and 145 marines got into the boats and pulled for No. 1 battery, under a slight fire from No. 4, which did no damage.

While the men were disembarking and forming up, Commander Sullivan, anxious to occupy the time usefully, went off alone to No. 2 battery, which was deserted—he had a hammer and a bag of spikes, and immediately set to work on the six guns; but he soon found it warm work, for a number of the enemy, who were concealed in a wood near by, opened a sharp fire of musketry upon him. The operation of “spiking” a gun consisted in driving a tapering spike as far as it would go into the vent—or “touch-hole,” as you may perhaps call it—and then breaking it short off. Sullivan performed this operation successfully with five guns, but the sixth spike would not break off readily—however, he bent it over, and then jumped over the parapet and joined his men. His son, Mr. H. N. Sullivan, who edits his letters, remarks very truly that this action would probably, in later years, have secured him the honour of the Victoria Cross—which, as you know, was not instituted until some nine years later, during the Crimean War.

The *San Martin*, as was afterwards discovered, had no fewer than one hundred and six shot-holes in her hull, the majority close down to the water-line, which shows what a good bid the enemy made for sinking her. Indeed, the only thing that saved her was the absolutely smooth water; had there been the slightest sea on, or had she heeled over only a few inches, she must have gone down. The enemy had no doubt recognised her as their former property, and hence the savage and concentrated attack upon her.

The surgeon of the *Gorgon*, Dr. Niddrie, went in a small boat from ship to ship during the thickest of the fight, to render assistance to the surgeons of the vessels which suffered most, and pulled after his own ship later on, under fire, to rejoin her after she had passed up beyond the broken barrier.

Of Captain Tréhouart no one could speak too highly. Sullivan remarks: “His noble conduct was the admiration of all, and the cordial, frank, and thoroughly straightforward manner in which he acted towards his allies throughout the expedition was beyond all praise.”

After Obligado there was still much to do on the Parana river, and Sullivan piloted some ships up eight hundred miles, as far as Corrientes, where such vessels had certainly never been seen before. I shall content myself, however, with this account of the actual fight at Obligado, which reflects so much credit upon British and French seamen alike.

Unfortunately, our Government disapproved of the action, and it was only by repeated representations that any rewards to those who had so gallantly fought were wrung from it; there was no medal issued for the action. Tréhouart was made an admiral; subsequently two French men-of-war were named *Obligado* and *Tréhouart*, while a very good painting of the fight hangs to this day in the Louvre.

However, as I said, most people think nowadays that the battle of Obligado was a good sort of thing in itself; and that it was very pluckily fought, there can be no manner of doubt.

A WHALING TRAGEDY OF 1844

"THERE she blows!" sang out a man in the usual measured tones from the foretopmast-head of a whaler, cruising in the Mozambique. "There she blows!"—the same sound was re-echoed from every part of the vessel, and in an instant crowds were pouring up from all the hatches, and every eye directed upwards. "Whereabouts?" resounded half a dozen voices at once. "On the weather quarter," sung out the man. "There she blows!" "Tell the captain," was the cry; but the captain had heard it, and was up already. "Down with your helm," said he to the steersman, "and luff the ship to the wind; haul in the lee braces, and aft with the main sheet. Mr. Long," he sang out to the second mate, "get those fore and jib sheets aft, and make all snug for going about; send a couple of hands up to shake the reef out of the foretopsail, and loose the foretopgallantsail. We'll see if we can't make the old craft crack her sides with laughing to-day. You, sir," continued he to the man at the mast-head, "whereabouts is the spout now?" "Bluff on the weather bow, sir; there's a whole school." "That's glorious," said he. "Steward, give the men a glass of grog." "Aye, aye, sir!" said that functionary, to whom it first occurred that, in his hurry to hear the news, he had left the cabin-boy in charge of a cask of rum, which he was broaching. "He'll be as drunk as a piper," said he, fully acquainted with the boy's propensities; and he bolted down below, vowing vengeance against the unfortunate lad if his breath even smelt of rum.

The reef was now out, and the topgallantsail hoisted, all the yards sharp braced, and the bowlines taut hauled. The breeze

was stiff, and the old craft leaned to it within a foot of the gunwale, and foamed at the mouth like a mad dog. "There she blows!" sung out a number of fellows, who had, in their eagerness to get a sight of their anticipated prey, climbed up the fore-rigging. "They're meeting us," said the man at the mast-head. "Boatsteerers, get your gear in, we'll lower in half an hour," were the orders of the captain, who was standing in the main-rigging, with his glass in his hand. "And, Mr. Brown, you'll get my boat ready. We'll have fine sport to-day, I guess, as Jonathan says."

All was excitement and hurry as these orders were given; boatsteerers were bringing their irons and lances up from below, getting their tubs into the boats, and bending up their lines. The men were each springing their oars, and examining their tholucks.* "Jack," said an after- to a fore-oarsman, "have you got a mat in your tholuck? I'll be hanged if some one ain't pinned mine. If I could catch him, I'd wring his head off."

"You'll find a new one," said Jack, "in my lumber-box below, and while you're at it, just put your hand in the till, and bring me up two or three inches of neger-head; if I ain't mistaken, there'll be rough work to-day."

"Steward," sung out the captain, "where's that glass of grog? Mr. Bowker, just see if that black rascal's smothered in the rum cask." At this moment the thick woolly head of this official, which bore no inconsiderable resemblance to a forty-shilling iron pot, emerged from the companion hatch, and after it followed, in due order, his face, neck, and upper extremities, as the doctor called them; and I daresay he was quite right to class all four extremities together, for they bore no inconsiderable resemblance to each other, the upper being in no great degree dissimilar in bulk, length, and clumsiness.

* This is a word I have not come across before; it appears to be a mixture of "rowlock" and "thole-pin," two alternative fittings for the oars to work upon; it may have been in use in whalers alone. The mat alluded to is to protect the oar in the long journeys often made by whalers' boats, which would soon wear the oar through, unless it was protected.—ED.

from the nether. In one of his mittens he grasped the neck of a bottle as if about to strangle it, while the other held, in as delicate a manner as nature would permit, the glass which was to measure out the delicious beverage. Samson was, notwithstanding his awkward figure and address, a good-natured and faithful fellow; and, although inclined to brag a little sometimes of his adroitness to strike a whale, which he had only tried once, and was then so nervous that he missed the fish, and, entangled in a coil of line, followed his own iron, precipitating himself over the bows of the boat, yet was generally very much respected by the captain and all his shipmates. The men who were not immediately engaged had assembled aft, on the quarter-deck, all in the light rig of a shirt, canvas trousers, and straw hat or striped night-cap, and evidently in great glee; some brought tin pannikins for their own or their messmates' grog; whilst others, trusting to the metallic character which their throats had acquired by long habit and free indulgence, boasted that they could swallow thunder and lightning if it were only in the form of real Jamaica.

After the grog was served and the preparations were made, the confusion subsided for a short time. We were evidently fast nearing our object, for the spouts could now be clearly discerned from the deck—and fine ones they were, and a goodly number of them, too; joy seemed to brighten up every countenance at the prospect of a good day's sport, after three weeks of idleness. Even the old cook was jerking the "tormentors"* at every one within his reach; and the little cabin-boy was pitching heavers and balls of yarn at the pigs, accompanying the motion with a squeaking "There she blows."

Another five minutes, and the orders were given, "Stand by the boats." In an instant every hand was at his station: a dead silence succeeded—not a whisper was uttered; you might have heard a pin fall. "Luff her up and back the foretopsail." The braces rattled through the blocks, the

* A huge two-pronged iron fork, used by the ship's cook to extract the pieces of meat from the copper.—ED.

yards swung round, and the sail flapped against the mast. "Lower away"; and every boat disappeared from its davits, and their separate crews hurried over the side after them, ready to jump in as soon as they reached the water. "Keep that boat off the side—you'll jam her under the chains; there, she's all clear and unhooked now. Shove off!" This order was seconded by a thrust from the vessel's side; every oar was out, and the sleek boat danced over the water as cheerily as if she was animated with the spirit of the crew. "Give way, my boys," said the steersman, "we must have first rap at these fellows to-day"; and he accompanied the order with a forward propulsion of his body, as if to add fresh impetus to the weight of the boat, while every nerve of the crew was strained, and the ash oars bellied and sprang out of the water, as if they disdained to dip themselves in the clear blue element.

"Come back!" sung out the captain from the quarter-deck before we had got two hundred yards from the vessel's side. "Long is swamped under the counter!" "No, I'll be hanged if I do," said the steersman; "let the lubberly fellow shift for himself, or sink; pull, my boys—can't hear." "Come back!" still cried the captain. "Can't hear," was the only reply received from the boatsteerer, and a more determined pull from the men.

"Bad beginning, this," whispered a young oarsman. "Hold that croaking red rag o' yours," muttered an amiable messmate, "and clap a locker on your jaw, or I'll do it for you." There was no resisting this argument at such a time, and the young fellow obeyed the injunction.

A few minutes of anxious stillness succeeded, in which every one found sufficient employment for his muscles and lungs without wasting either in further colloquy, when the silence was again broken by the bowman: "Where are they now?" said he, in a tone rising above a smothered whisper. "Right ahead, about a cable's length off," answered the boatsteerer; "half a dozen good stretches with your oar, Ben, and then you may lay it in, and get your irons ready. Now, my lads, strain a point," and the boat spun like a top through the

water. "Lay in, Ben. Do you see that fine fellow to leeward of the two? you must stick the iron in him. Another pull, my boys. Sheer off, sheer off; the boat's nose is right under this fellow's tail," said the boatman in an undertone.

The next instant we were laying on our oars abreast, and to windward of three huge, black, greasy, and shapeless masses. What I learnt afterwards to recognise as the backs of the monsters, rose in an irregular mound from the water, level with the boat's gunwale; the head, which forms nearly a fourth of the whole bulk, was cylindrical and truncated; or, to describe it more appropriately, it appeared for all the world as if the heads of two of these brutes had been originally built in one length, like north-country colliers, and the cook's axe, or some equally sharp instrument, had made a fair section between their separate spout holes, and within six inches of each. The tails of these elegant playthings I could discern sculling about in the water like ladies' fans on a warm day, and had heard pretty frequently of the latent energy contained in these instruments of destruction; I knew that a single whisk of one of them would have sprinkled the boat upon the water, like rain-drops after a thunder-clap.

Reader, you may suppose that my heart was anywhere but in my ribs at this moment; the fact is, it had been rapping against them since I left the ship, but it now took one tremendous leap and stuck in my throat. I was as cool, however, as a cucumber, and could, with the utmost deliberation, have swigged off a stiff glass of seventeen-proof to the health of our good Queen, "God bless her!" As soon as we had sheered up alongside our prize (for we had made sure of hoisting our colours on the carcase of one of these Spanish galleons) every eye was turned to the bowman, and the iron glanced from his hand over the backs of the intermediate two, and struck the third behind the fin, just between wind and water. "Starn all!" cried the bowman—but it was no use: the monster started ahead, and literally dragging the boat over his companions, almost capsized it, while the line whizzed round the loggerhead and through the groove in the boat's

bow until it smoked again. "Water the line!" cried the boatsteerer, through whose hand the line was gliding before it passed round the loggerhead, and who seemed to feel as if he were striking fire on his flesh, notwithstanding about half a dozen folds of "number one" canvas, with which he had taken the precaution to provide himself. Two boat buckets were in immediate requisition, and the line was thoroughly drenched, as coil after coil disappeared, like lightning, from the tub. The whale had thrown up his tail and gone down. "How many coils are left?" sung out the bowman. "Only a couple," was the reply. "I fear she'll run it all out; but take another turn round the loggerhead, and snub her a bit."

This was done, and the line was strained to its utmost, while the boat's bows were surged underwater. "Slack off; you'll swamp the boat," was the cry, and a fathom or two yielded and brought her head up again. Fortunately at this critical moment the fish was winded, and began to rise slowly.

All the boat's crew were now employed in hauling in the line, and coiling it snugly aft in the stern sheets of the boat, while the bowman and boatsteerer were looking out in which direction the line tended, and managing the boat so as to clear it of the whale when she rose to the surface. All but about twenty fathoms were now in, and the fish was rising fast. "Down to your oars—pull larboard and back starboard oars; back hard—back, I say, or the fish'll lift us." This was hardly uttered, when she shoved her head up within two yards of the boat, and blew up a most refreshing shower-bath. "Back all," continued the bowman, "and slue her nose to port, while I push this lance in her." He hove the lance, and the smooth and well-polished steel glided a full fathom up to its socket into the body of the fish. "She feels that," said he, with a grim smile; and certainly she seemed to do so, for she started ahead as if she had been pursued by a pack of bloodhounds. On we went too, tearing through the water after her, at the rate of twelve or fourteen knots, and not an inch of line was yielded this time. The breeze had freshened considerably,

and a little swell had got up, so that the sparkling water dashed on each side of the boat, and over her wedge-bows, and rose above her gunwale when she dived through a breaker, from which she emerged and shook off the spray like a wild duck, only to bury herself for the moment under the next.

It was as much as the after-oarsman could manage to keep the boat clear out of the water. This was glorious fun for a real South-Sea whaler—one who had acquired a thorough *gôlt* for the sport ; for my own part, I confess, I thought there was considerable probability of the boat being swamped when dragged through a green sea coming bodily on to us, and whose bearded crest curled round and foamed upon us full five feet above the bow of the boat ; but she passed through one after another, like a thread through a needle's eye, and I soon gained confidence, and enjoyed it as much as any one.

By this time the whole shoal was alarmed, and was pouring down from all sides upon the whale to which we were fast, to gratify, I suppose, that very laudable curiosity common to whales as to men—of knowing “what's the matter!” and to discover and punish any aggressors on the peace of their community. We were now in considerable jeopardy : sometimes three or four of these bull-headed monsters, coming down abreast, would threaten to lay the boat on her beam ends ; and when the line was slacked off politely, and with all the speed imaginable, to allow them to pass ahead of us, another would be discovered bowling up astern, with all his canvas set, and blowing and wallowing like a grampus ; the boatsteerer was plying his long oar, and sluing the boat about in every direction, to escape a disagreeable detection by any of these jealous avengers of their injured messmate. And we fortunately did escape. After they had searched a short time in vain for the cause, and found the case apparently desperate, they all slunk off (another point, by the by, in which whales resemble men) and left the unfortunate to shift for himself. As soon as the coast was clear, and the whale had slackened her speed, we pulled up alongside, and the boat's nose was pushed right on her, and another lance found its way up to

the socket, just under her fin. "That's surely a sticker," said the bowman; but she threw up her tail, and started ahead again with accelerated speed.

"Hallo," said the boatsteerer, "there's Bowker water-logged, and our fish running right down upon him; if she shoves her nose into his boat, there'll be a pretty mess." But fortunately she didn't steer direct for him, but passed within about half a cable's length. Here we could see the poor fellows in the water, on each side of their boat, rolling her from side to side to jerk the water out of her. "What's the matter?" sung out the boatsteerer. "Lost a couple of irons, and got capsized into the bargain," was the reply. "Do you want us to help you?" "No—we'll manage it ourselves. Mind you don't lose that fish." "We'll take care of that," muttered the bowman; and he again ordered to haul up alongside, that he might take a little more blood from his patient. "I think," said he, "this is one of Jonathan's fish; you must sound nine fathoms of cold steel before you reach his heart. Here, then, goes for the third fathom!" And he certainly gave the full measure. "Ah, there she spouts blood!" And the sea all round was in a short time dyed with blood, and covered with lumps of clotted gore. "Now, my lads, prepare for the flurry." The fish was quiet for a few moments, as if dead, and then started ahead by fits, backing upon the boat as suddenly, requiring the most adroit management to keep it clear of its tail, which was playing about, as if feeling for its tormentors, lashing the water into a foam and dashing it in green seas over the boat. It would then give a spring out of the water and turn short round upon the boat, which was slued round as quickly; and round and round they both went five or six times, like corks in a whirlpool, the one close to the other, while the fish was spouting a deep crimson flood, which indicated, as the boatsteerer very sagely remarked, "some main-pipe had sprung a leak," and, after a few more eccentric movements, her strength appeared wasted.

Just at this juncture the boatsteerer cast his eyes to windward, and saw Brown's boat fast to a fish, which was

cutting all manner of capers, and twisting itself about like a lamprey. "That's a wicked one," said he, "and will try a young hand like Brown." The next moment a wild cry arose from that quarter, and a crash was heard. "He's done for, at last," said the imperturbable man in the same calm tone. "Ben, just clap the drag with the blue flag on our fish, that the ship may pick it up, and let's pull to windward and see what's the mischief. I'm mistaken if our messmate Brown ain't gone to Davy Jones."

In a few minutes we were alongside the wreck. All the bow of the boat was sliced off as clean as if cut by a carpenter's saw, and the crew had placed the oars athwart the remainder to steady it and keep it on its keel. As we pulled up to them, there was a kind of forced smile on their countenances. "Bad sport to-day," said one or two of them. "Where's Brown?" asked our boatsteerer. "He's gone!" was the mournful reply. "The fish jammed him into the bow of the boat, and carried them off together." "Poor fellow!" said the boatsteerer, "he's been my messmate three voyages. I taught him when he was a boy to splice and knot and tie a reef-point, and a better boatsteerer there wasn't in the ship." As he paid this tribute to the memory of his departed messmate, more simple and sincere, as well as better deserved, than many a pompous eulogium which is pronounced over the dust of the great, the tears dimmed his eye and trickled down his iron cheek. "Well," said he, "it's no use blubbering," and he drew his brawny and sunburnt arm across his face, to brush away the only drop that human weakness had forced down its furrows perhaps since his childhood. "Jack," said the bowman, "do you see that bit of the wreck to windward of us? Steer for it; perhaps we may chance to pick up a few of Brown's timbers there, and, you know, it will be just as well to sew them up decently in his hammock, and get the doctor to read the service over them."

As we neared the bit of wreck alluded to, it was discovered to be the bow of the boat. "I think I see Brown's hulk," said the bowman, "and there's a shovel-nose lawyer [shark]

making for it." "Run your lance through him," said the boatsteerer. "I won't be such a fool," was the reply; "it would only strike fire upon his side, and be fit for the lumber-locker afterwards." When, however, he saw the voracious brute turn up the white of his side and open his enormous jaws to seize a leg of the corpse, "I can't stand that," said he, and he caught up his lance and plunged it through the body of the brute. The shark turned round, and writhed itself further up the lance, clenching it on the other side. "Here's a pretty business," said the bowman, and, laying hold of the pole, tried in vain to drag it out, while the fish spun round like a weathercock in a whirlwind, and twisted the shaft into a corkscrew. Two or three more drags took equally little effect, and he seized the boat-knife and cut the line which bound the iron to the pole. Off the fish started, almost directly, downward, with the lance through his body. "He won't get that out of himself," said one of the men. "I shan't find another like that in a hurry," said the bowman; and as deep a cloud of grief seemed to pass over his countenance for the loss of his favourite lance as had a few minutes before over the boatsteerer's for the loss of his messmate.

We now looked for the corpse. It had drifted a little to leeward during this affray, and we dropped down upon it. It was sadly mangled; all the upper part of the body was beaten into one pulpy mass, and the skull was flattened like a pancake upon the jaws. On the head-sheets of the bow, which was floating near, we could discover where the poor fellow's head had been crushed by the tail of the whale; a part of the skull was jammed into the wood, with the scalp and hair on it. We lifted the body out of the water and laid it on the line in the stern-sheets, and, having taken the wreck of the bow in tow, in rather a mournful manner, which was strangely contrasted with the hilarity and excitement of the few hours before, we proceeded to return to the assistance of the six men who were hanging on the wreck, with their oars crossed. Long, who had got his boat righted and patched up by the carpenter, had lowered from the ship, and reached them before we

arrived. We divided the crew between us, and took both parts of the wreck in tow. "I hope," said one of the fellows, "the captain'll give us a glass of grog after this sousing; need to wet inside as well as out." "Jack," said another, "have you got a quid in your hat? I've been chawing at this rope-yarn an hour."

During the course of these interesting remarks we were pulling towards the ship, and, as we neared the old craft, we could discern the earnest expression of the countenances gazing over the side. "Who's gone?" roared out several voices at once. Our tale was soon told, and as each one heard it he dropped some expression of compassion or tribute of praise to the memory of the departed. The body was lifted upon deck, and the sailmaker immediately set to work to sew it up in a hammock, with half a dozen shot at its feet. This was effected while the men were taking their supper below, and in about an hour the bell began to toll. The crew collected slowly at the gangway, and formed round the corpse. It was beautiful then to see the stern features of many a weather-beaten face relaxed into a childlike softness, and the heart, which only a few hours before beat high with intrepid daring, subdued and melted with generous pity. There was an awe in the scene which overcame even the most thoughtless. The topsail was backed, and the noble ship had stayed her course for a moment, as if to act as mourner in the scene; and the sound of the water, as it lashed her dark and glittering side, when she lurched in the long and heavy swell, or splashed beneath her heaving counter, answered in solemn cadence to the creaking yards and the whistling shrouds. And the snow-white seabird, as it wheeled its airy flight round the giddy mast-top, uttered its shrill cry, which struck prophetic on the ear. The sun was setting just opposite the gangway, and its large red globe, magnified through the mists that skirted the horizon, cast a livid glare upon the seas, as their tops curled into white foam, and lit up the faces of the men; while above the deep, dark ridge of vapours which lay upon the bosom of the waters, and into which the sun was just entering, fleecy

S. S.

clouds of all fantastic shapes, whose hue was ever varying—sometimes of a deep purple, edged with gold, then azure and crimson, and then all golden—were floating in a sea of ether. You might have thought the spirit of the departed had gone to inhabit those islands of the blessed, so calm and beautiful they seemed.

The bell ceased to toll, and in a clear and audible voice the surgeon read the Burial Service of the English Church. When he came to that part, "we commit his body," he stopped—a low stifled sob arose from the crowd, and even the men who had hold of the grating, from which the corpse was to be precipitated, seemed for a time palsied. It was only for an instant: a heavy plunge in the next told that the sea had received its dead; the waters closed over him.

The mighty ocean is the tomb of one who was almost unknown but to a few shipmates, who were paying these last honours to his mangled corpse—it mocks in its magnificence the mausoleums of kings.

CAPTAIN BOB GILROY'S LAST MISTAKE

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

"WATCH'S dinner, please, steward!" shouted Stevens, entering the midshipmen's berth at half-past twelve, and hammering on the sliding panel opening into the steward's pantry; "and my rum, too, please."

He was promptly provided with a liberal plateful of Irish stew, compounded of salt beef and vegetables—it was known in the berth as "hoosh," or "slatherumgash," and was really not at all bad, the beef having been well soaked in fresh water. A tumbler with a wineglassful of rum was placed beside it, while bread was represented by a tin of ship's biscuit. Stevens, who had just been keeping the forenoon watch, proceeded to satisfy an uncritical craving for sustenance.

"I say," he remarked, as he slanted his body to preserve equilibrium in the lively motion of the ship, and kept a careful hand upon his grog, "the weather looks jolly rum, I can tell you—the wind's on the starboard quarter, and there's no end of a swell rolling up on the port quarter. There she goes!"—the ship gave a violent lurch as he spoke, and his "hoosh" and grog threatened to "fetch away"—"the glass is going down like old boots, too."

"All in the day's work," said the senior sub, who was a non-smoker, and was reading a library book; "it's what we must expect, when we sell our little farms and come to sea."

"Old Horniman looks jolly grumpy about it," said Stevens;

"but the skipper's all for putting more sail on her—'Send her through it, master!—send her through it!'" And he disrespectfully mimicked Bob Gilroy's voice and manner.

Having recently passed his eighteenth birthday, Stevens was officially permitted to smoke and draw his allowance of rum; so he rapidly cleared his plate and went on deck to have a pipe. With the reader's consent we will follow him and have a look at the weather.

The *Jaguar* was on her voyage north to Bermuda and Halifax, by way of the Windward Islands; she had left these astern by one hundred and fifty miles or so, and was bowling along, as Stevens had said, with the wind on the starboard quarter, which was in itself a somewhat remarkable fact, for she had not yet left the region of the north-east trade-wind, and should by rights have been close-hauled.

No one, of course, would complain of a fair wind, least of all Bob Gilroy, who liked things to be made easy for him, and was disposed to regard this unexpected interference with the usual direction of the wind thereabouts as a special dispensation of Providence in his favour.

There was, however, a sinister and unpleasant appearance of the sky and sea, which should have reminded him that a fair wind may not invariably be an unmixed blessing—more especially in the month of August in the West Indies.

Why August? you may ask.

Well, thereby hangs this tale, and I will explain. You have no doubt heard of such things as hurricanes—West Indian hurricanes; it is a bad word, but it is the word usually applied to the cyclones which prevail in this quarter of the globe during the summer months. They are prevalent in all parts of the world at certain times, except in more or less high latitudes, and are known in China as *typhoons*, and in the Indian Ocean simply as cyclones, which is the proper title of them all.

A cyclone is a great whirlwind, sometimes two or three hundred miles in diameter, the wind revolving in more or less of a circle round a centre of calm, while the whole

body of the storm travels along at a speed which may vary from ten to fifty miles an hour. The great feature about cyclones is the terrific force of the wind—an ordinary gale cannot approach it in this respect—and it is easy to understand that this huge whirlwind, in its progress, raises a tremendous sea, and that as the direction of the wind must necessarily be different in every quarter of the circle, it will often be what seamen term a “cross” sea—that is, a sea running for a time at variance with the direction of the wind, and breaking over a ship in a very dangerous fashion.

The wind in the West Indian cyclones revolves in a direction contrary to that of the hands of a watch. Lay your watch down on the table, and imagine that the figure twelve is the north point of the compass, and that the wind is whirling round in the opposite direction to the motion of the hands; you will easily see that in the middle of the quarter from twelve to three—north to east—it will be blowing from the south-east, from three to six from the south-west, from six to nine from the north-west, and from nine to twelve from the north-east, and so on, all round the circumference.

The West Indian cyclones have their origin somewhere to the eastward of the Windward Islands, and usually travel over some part of these, turning eventually round towards north, or north-east, and dying out in the Atlantic. But they are very uncertain in their travels: sometimes they will sail right across to Cuba and Florida, and at other times they will curve sharply to the northward and miss the islands altogether, and they also vary very greatly in size and intensity. They all have this same characteristic, however, that the nearer the centre, the more violent the wind and the lower the barometer; while the centre, or vortex, is a veritable pandemonium, with clashing seas, running every way at once, and throwing the spray mast high, the calm being broken in upon by terrific gusts of wind from various quarters—clearly, a place to be avoided, this vortex.

A good seaman, who has studied the law of storms, may, by watching the barometer and the shifting of the wind, contrive to avoid at any rate the full force of a cyclone, and keep clear of the centre; but Bob Gilroy, though he would probably have punched the head of any man who told him he was not a good seaman, had not taken the trouble to study the matter, and so he rubbed his hands over the fair wind, and rather scorned what he deemed to be the somewhat craven fears of Mr. Horniman, the navigator.

The wind was from south-east, a fresh breeze, on the star-board quarter, and the ship, under topsails, topgallantsails, and foresail, was making nine or ten knots. The sky was strangely menacing: to the south westward lay a great dun-coloured bank of cloud, almost greenish in the deepest part; great wisps of vapour stretched from it overhead, and detached clouds came flying over, across the direction of the wind, discharging sudden showers of thick rain.

The sea, however, presented even a stranger appearance, for a steep, rolling swell came up on the port, or "lee" quarter, of the ship, sometimes almost lipping over the bulwarks as she heeled under her sails, and frequently coming in freely through the gun-ports, and gurgling down the scuppers. The water, instead of being of that splendid sapphire blue which is usual in these latitudes, was of a muddy, ugly hue—a mere effect of reflected light, of course, but very weird in appearance, as the fresh south-east wind crossed the swell, raising opposing diagonal ripples, and sending the spray in hissing showers before it.

The officers, mostly in waterproofs, were smoking under the bridge, and the weather was the topic of conversation.

"The skipper wants to put more sail on her—royals and topmast stun' sail," said Number One, the first lieutenant.

"He'll precious soon have to take it off again, I expect," said Bruce, the third lieutenant; "looks about as dirty as it could—look there!" He, and all of them, caught at something or other as he spoke; a great sea looked at them over

the lee bulwarks; the ship lurched heavily to starboard; the wheel "kicked" violently, so that two men could scarcely hold on to it.

"Mind your lee helm!" shouted the officer of the watch from the bridge; "where are you letting her off to?"

"Mind the lee helm, sir," echoed the quartermaster, imperturbably.

"Looks uncommonly like a hurricane," said Number One, knocking out his pipe and going below. He looked at the barometer in the steerage, and whistled—whew! It had gone down nearly a tenth since noon! Number One usually looks for a little quiet time in the afternoon at sea, as only the watch is called on deck; but he had a presentiment that he was not going to get it this time, as he drank a glass of sherry in the ward-room. Then came the voice of the officer of the watch from the bridge:

"Call the watch! Watch, set royals and topmast stun' sail!"

Bob Gilroy, not to be intimidated by the aspect of the weather, was going to "send her through it."

The topmen, as they went aloft to loose the canvas, looked round apprehensively—you get a fine, comprehensive view of the sky and sea from aloft, and certainly it appeared to be a strange time for making more sail.

"Means reef topsails, I should think," said the leading fore-royal yard-man, as he obediently cast off the gaskets, and held out his hand as a signal that he was ready to "let fall."

The extra sail was set in a few minutes—there was not, at the moment, too much wind for it, had the weather been fine, with a high glass—and the ship immediately bounded forward with increased speed: the topmast stun' sail is a fine, driving sail with a quarterly wind.

Number One, with a seaman's love of seeing all that was going on, went on deck again, glancing at the barometer as he passed, with a shrug of his shoulders; the top of the quicksilver had an ugly, crooked appearance, only present when it is falling rapidly.

The dun-coloured, greenish cloud was advancing from the south-west, the swell ever increasing, the ship cutting a rare caper in the cross sea.

"Looks ugly, master," said Number One to the navigator, while Bob was out of hearing.

"I should think it did! He's mad, I believe," jerking his head towards the skipper; "we shall have a pretty scrimmage presently."

"Wonder if it's any use talking to him," said Number One; "we are rather far north for a bad hurricane——"

"Rum-looking weather, Seacroft, isn't it?" said Bob, coming over to where number one stood.

"A great deal too rum to be pleasant, sir," was the reply. "I'm afraid we're being chased by a cyclone, and——" he glanced aloft at the cloud of bellying canvas. The skipper took in his meaning.

"Well, we have plenty of hands to get it in smartly," he said; "that's where we score off a merchant vessel. Meanwhile, she's making a good ten knots on her course."

"Well, sir, you'll forgive my offering my opinion, but I should have some of it off her, and get up steam; if it's a hurricane, we shall want to be ready for anything——"

"Get up steam! with a rattling fair wind?" said Gilroy, forgetting that little incident of the "slave-chase," when he had steamed full-speed before the trade-wind; "I should have the Admiral down on me when he saw the log, I can tell you!"

"The barometer's logged, sir, as well as the wind," said Number One drily.

But Bob was as obstinate as a pig, and his first lieutenant's advice only caused him to stick more stubbornly to his own views.

Well, poor Bob was destined to pay a heavy price for his obstinacy.

As the afternoon passed, the aspect of the weather became more and more alarming. The dense cloud crept over, a compact, solid body, now lit up with frequent flashes of

lightning; dusk set in prematurely, and the dead-white, crossing crests of the seas clashed and leapt up with a singularly weird, menacing appearance. The ship was difficult to steer, yawing wildly, and tumbling about in sudden, unexpected lurches which tried the "sea-legs" of the oldest hands on board. The wind had scarcely freshened, but it blew through the taut rigging with an unusual sound—a dismal moan, which changed sometimes to a more piercing note, as the swell suddenly swung the tall masts violently to windward.

At half-past four the men were mustered for the usual inspection. It was all that they could do to keep their feet, and the ceremony was got through as quickly as possible, with anxious glances aloft and around; and while the officers were thus engaged in inspecting the men, there came the first mishap.

A huge sea, towering up on the lee quarter, came pouring in through the gun-ports, and nearly swept the marines off their feet; then almost every one on deck charged, staggering, across to starboard in a tremendous lurch, and the starboard-quarter boat, lifted by the sea at the davits, came unhooked at the bow, and hung, with a clatter of falling oars and other gear, suspended by the after-tackle alone.

The old boatswain, a smart seaman, who had been expecting all the afternoon to receive orders to secure the boats against such accidents, came running aft, muttering, "Ah, there she goes!"

The boat banged violently against the ship's side as she lurched back again.

"Cut her away!" said Bob Gilroy. It was the only thing to be done, and in another moment the first cutter, a trim, smartly painted boat, dropped from the davit and went astern, her white paint gleaming on the crest of the sea—a floating token of disaster.

The men, disorganised by this incident, and unable to keep their ranks, were clustering in the gangways and on the quarter-deck. The wind suddenly increased with a menacing scream, and the lighter canvas strained almost to bursting, the

top-gallant-masts and the studdingsail-boom buckling dangerously ; there was an instant accession of gloom.

"Take it off her !" said the skipper.

"Hands shorten sail to topsails !" shouted Number One ; and every man raced in silence to his station. "Let go topgallant and royal halyards !"

But the order had been too long delayed ; sail was shortened, indeed, in "record" time, but not by the legitimate process. The wind freshened fiercely, there was a blinding discharge of lightning, the thunder crackling simultaneously, and in an instant the studdingsail-boom and all three top-gallant-masts snapped off like carrots, the big studdingsail thrashing and snapping and tearing into ribbons, with the heavy boom suspended to it ; the upper sails and masts hung down before the topsails, swaying to and fro, and threatening every instant to tear them. The ship, under full topsails and foresail, reeled and staggered before the rapidly increasing blast, burying her bows at times, literally driven under water by the pressure ; three men at the helm could not control her—she yawed about like a terrified horse, turning her bows hither and thither, as though seeking some means of escape.

As quickly as possible the topsails were lowered, bulging out in a great curve from the yards ; but it was impossible to reef them—impossible to send men on the yards, with the wreck of the top-gallant-masts, the tangle of yards and sails and gear, swaying to and fro before all—they would have been swept away like flies, killed or maimed by spars and blocks.

There were plenty of plucky and seasoned men among the crew, ready to dare anything, and some of these, at a word from the boatswain, were already aloft forward, cutting away the wreck of that miserable studdingsail, which should never have been set.

"Cut away everything and lay her to !" yelled Bob in Number One's ear, for the howl of the wind had become almost deafening, the lightning was terrific, and a drenching, blinding rain, mingled with salt spray, drove almost horizontally athwart the vessel.

The topmen, nothing daunted, crawled aloft at the risk of their lives to execute the order; but it was a hopeless task in the gathering darkness, which the blinding glare of the lightning intensified. The tangled mass of ropes, stays, shrouds, backstays, halyards, sheets, clewlines, braces, all attached to the broken mast and yards—to clear such a raffle is a troublesome and lengthy task even in moderate weather with daylight to aid. One by one they gave it up, and crawled down on deck again.

Lay her to! It was easier said than done. The storm-sails were below in the sailroom; the topsails and foresail must somehow be got off her. The wind was momentarily increasing, shrieking through the rigging with a force which must be felt to be comprehended; men were blown about on deck, turned round, flung against guns, rolled in the scuppers; the sea was rising in a terrific manner, frequently breaking over the quarter in volumes as the vessel yawed about, and surging from side to side, the choking scuppers totally inadequate to carry it off. The hatches were unsecured, and plenty of water found its way below. The carpenter and his assistants, without waiting for orders, were crawling about with tarpaulins and wooden battens and bags of nails, endeavouring to remedy the evil; but a large tarpaulin is an awkward affair to handle in a hurricane—just when you think you have got it in place, it will suddenly whirl up, sending the battens flying, and envelop you in its folds. The plucky carpenter and his mates had several such experiences, besides being occasionally blown and rolled into two feet of water in the scuppers.

Neither was the gunner idle: with two or three good men—and the gunner and his mates are most frequently among the best men in the ship—he went from gun to gun, putting on extra tackles and lashings.

To the majority of the crew, however, there came no definite orders for a space, and there began to creep in among them that paralysing influence which idleness in peril will exercise, even among the stout of heart—that desire to crawl in somewhere and “wait until it’s over,”

And still the ship, with her bellying topsails, and the foresail lifting in a great curve above the foreyard, staggered on; steering was becoming momentarily more difficult. The binnacle lights, kindled and placed in position with immense difficulty at the time of inspection, had all been blown out save one, which still yielded a dim, flickering light; the compass-card, barely visible, swung to and fro with the motion. It was impossible to steer the course within two or three points, and frequently the ship would swing dangerously one way or the other, and great threatening seas would come roaring up, broad on the quarter, as though they would entirely overwhelm her.

The skipper and principal officers were holding a shouting conference under the bridge: to get the storm-mizen on her, and cut away the topsails and foresail from the yards—this was agreed upon as the only course; but how to do it? The men could not hold on aloft in such a breeze; and if they could, there was still that ghastly wreck of upper masts and yards hanging down before all. Moreover, the topsail-sheets, as in all vessels of this class, were of chain, and would hold the remains of the sails sufficiently, perhaps, to prevent her from coming to the wind.

"Clap on the clewlines, and let go the sheets!" yelled Number One; "they'll blow away fast enough when they're spilt!"

This was done, the men, with great difficulty, being got to understand what was required of them; and the big sails, thrashing furiously, were speedily rent and destroyed, the stout canvas streaming out in long shreds, which were tied into hard knots, and torn piecemeal from the yards.

The staunch old boatswain came staggering along with a party of men, bearing the storm-mizen; but the wind and sea by this time were so tremendous that the men could scarcely stand to their work. The gaff had to be lowered down, the spanker cut adrift, and the little rag of a storm-sail substituted for it—all simple enough, if done in good time; but now . . . !

And yet it was done, though it took a long time in the doing, the ship meanwhile tearing along under the foresail alone. It was done, for seamen under such circumstances will perform apparent impossibilities. One man lost his life over it, flung senseless against the bulwarks, and drowned in the scuppers, two or three others were more or less seriously injured, and when it was done, when the sail was secured to the gaff, they dared not hoist it ! With the ship wildly yawing about, it would be madness to do so until the foresail was off her ; once let the storm-sail shake, and it would go the way of the topsails. The only chance of bringing her to the wind was to get the foresail out of the way somehow, and put the helm "hard down" when the mizen was set. Even under the most favourable conditions to bring her broadside on to that terrific sea was dangerous ; if she was hampered by the wreck of the foresail from coming quickly up to the wind the risk would be enormously increased. The jib, of course, had long since blown away, there was no head-sail to hinder the manœuvre, but they dared not do it—they must run on !

The ship was now in the thick of the cyclone, and the direction of the wind remained practically the same. What did this mean ? A moment's consideration will show you that the vortex must be coming straight for the ship. Had she been "laid to," practically stationary, early in the afternoon, the vortex would certainly have passed to the northward of her ; as it was, the speed and course of progress of the storm were such that, while the ship was running, it was steering straight over her.

The navigator, who had been hastily reading up the West India pilotage instructions, was perhaps the only man who realised this. Of course, every officer should have been properly instructed in the law of storms, and should know what to do in order to avoid a cyclone as far as possible. I can only tell you that what should have been, was not. If an officer chose to read up these matters for his own amusement and instruction, well and good ; but there was nobody whose

business it was to take him and teach him all about it. Bob Gilroy knew nothing about it. Mr. Horniman, an excellent and careful navigator in all other respects, had only "mugged" it up from the Admiralty text-book when the wind was already shrieking like ten thousand fiends through the rigging, and now he knew, too late—they dared not lay the ship to, even if it would then have availed—they must run; and how long would the foresail hold on?

There was nothing to be done. The men and officers found shelter and comparative security where they could; four men struggled at the helm to keep the ship before the wind. The flickering binnacle lamp had long been extinguished, but the quartermaster, a cool old seaman, had very resourcefully provided himself with a length of gunner's "slow-match," the glowing end of which was held by a blue-jacket close to the glass shade of the compass, affording just sufficient light for the helmsman to get a rough idea of the ship's course on the oscillating compass-card.

The barometer had gone down to an unknown figure—twenty-seven and a half inches—and was still slowly falling; the lightning played incessantly, the drenching rain and spray flew over the ship in sheets, the mountainous seas constantly topped the bulwarks. The boats were smashed where they hung, and one was actually blown inboard.

About half-past eight the foresail split from head to foot; for a few moments the two halves hung on, then the whole of the starboard side was ripped into fragments and blown away, the remainder soon followed—"bare poles" now! And still they must run, nothing else for it. To bring her broadside to the sea was too dangerous, even if the storm-mizen would stand.

Just at this moment, as the foresail blew away in rags, there was a tremendous double flash of lightning, and simultaneously a shrill cry from many voices partially pierced the awful din of wind and crackling thunder.

Flung aloft upon a huge sea, close on the starboard bow, was a ship—a large merchant vessel, partially dismasted, her

sails streaming in shreds from the yards. So close was she, that it needed only a sudden yaw of the ship in that direction to run over her. Helpless, almost on her beam ends, the hideous blue glare showed her plainly for a moment; then the ship swept on, how close to the unhappy stranger no one could tell, for the darkness was impenetrable, the rain and spray blinding, but it must have been a matter of a few yards only. Those who had caught sight of her realised this; they had involuntarily cried out as they saw her, almost in the ship's path; then she was gone. They felt that she was doomed, and the horrors of their own situation seized upon them with tenfold force.

About nine o'clock the wind suddenly decreased; there came almost a calm, followed by a terrific blast of wind; again and again was this repeated. The ship became utterly unmanageable, and in a few minutes she was in an awful hurly-burly. The huge seas, running every way at once, clashed and threw the foam high in the air. On every side the ship was assailed, tons of water breaking on board and surging about the deck. A number of sea-birds, drawn into the vortex by the more or less spiral motion of the wind—for it rarely revolves in a true circle—fell on deck, or alighted in the rigging, uttering shrill cries of terror, which seemed to be echoed from the wall of blackness around them. Now and then a sudden squall of tremendous force would tear over the ship.

Overhead the sky had partially cleared, a pale moon showing occasionally, the scud driving across it in all directions. The dim light served to reveal the awful spectacle, absolutely paralysing in its terrors: the wrecked ship, the fearful, towering seas, the screaming birds. White faces could be distinguished—faces of men holding on where they could, struggling in the pitiless, invading seas, not speaking a word.

The navigator, however, kept his wits about him.

"We shall have it from north-west in a few minutes, sir," he said to Bob Gilroy. "We ought to get her hove-to on the port tack with the mizen—or a tarpaulin."

Bob was quite ready now to listen to advice from any one who appeared to know anything about it. Number One was listening also, and took immediate steps. His voice, as he called the boatswain aft, sounded indescribably weird and hollow—the effect of the comparative stillness, no doubt, after the howl of the wind, and also, perhaps, to some extent, of tension of mind.

They got the little storm-sail up, and hooked the sheet on the starboard side; but how were they to ensure the wind coming on the port side? The ship's head had swung every way since the wind left them, and the compass was still swaying wildly about. She now lay with her head, roughly, south-east, so the fresh blast would come over the stern, and might catch the sail on either side—in any case it was, of course, doubtful whether it would long stand the terrific pressure.

They waited anxiously. There was a hoarse roar, and a sudden blast came from the north, then a calm again, and immediately afterwards the black curtain closed over the sky once more, and the storm was upon them again.

Alas! their plans proved to be futile. The sail was caught at first edge on, shivered and flapped, and then the full force of the blast took it on the *wrong* side, forcing the ship's stern round until the wind came well on the starboard side, and before they could attempt to shift the sheet over—which would have probably also involved the loss of the sail—the canvas ripped asunder, and was soon fluttering away to leeward.

Now their position was indeed awful. The ship was nearly broadside on to the wind, and, having little or no way on, the helm was useless. Had she had steam up, the screw would have enabled them to place her as they pleased; but the screw was hoisted up, and the *Jaguar* was a sailing ship for the time being. Could they have brought her up with the wind on the bow, by means of any sort of sail, it would have been the safest course; now she refused either to come up or fall off from the wind, and lay over at a tremendous angle, the seas breaking over her.

There was only one thing to do—cut away the mizen-mast. The boatswain and a few men, seizing some "tomahawks," or boarding-axes, which were kept round the mast, leapt on to the bulwarks and hacked at the shrouds. With the tremendous pressure of the wind, it needed only a few strokes. Away went the mast, crashing to leeward; but still the ship would not pay off, though she righted a little.

Number One, shouting and pushing at a little crowd of men, got them on the forebrace, and braced up the foreyard, so that the wind exerted pressure upon nearly its full length, with some rags of canvas still attached. The ship began to pay off slowly; but at that moment a terrific sea came over, and it seemed as though the end had come.

The vast body of water carried all before it: the large boat, stowed on deck, was smashed into chips, and thrown against the lee bulwarks; the ship lay over until it seemed impossible that she could recover; men were swimming about, clutching at one another in the blackness, and some were washed away and lost; a gun broke adrift, and went thundering across the deck, smashing the lee bulwarks and going overboard, which served a good purpose in relieving the deck of the weight of water on the lee side; but surely this was the last of the *Jaguar*!

No; a ship is a wonderful thing, and takes a tremendous lot of sinking. She was going off before the wind, gradually righting, and there were not wanting those with sufficient presence of mind to rush to the helm. Soon, with the wind right aft, she was once more driving before it, retracing her steps, indeed, for the wind on this side of the storm was, of course, exactly opposite in direction.

How many men were washed overboard at that awful moment was not known until later on; but there were several with smashed limbs and other injuries to be attended to, as far as was possible, and some beyond all human aid.

And where was Captain Bob Gilroy? The lightning had ceased, and no lantern could be kept alight for a moment. Some of the officers went groping about in the inky darkness

and screaming tempest, shouting the captain's name ; but there was no response. Number One was unhurt, but the second lieutenant and the navigator were seriously injured. It was impossible to find out as yet how many more had fallen victims.

There was a fearful sea running, and the ship was only with the utmost care and difficulty kept before the wind. There was, according to the carpenter's estimate, some four or five feet of water in the hold, and still the awful wind kept on.

But now the barometer was rising fast, and the worst was over. Soon after midnight there was a sensible decrease of wind, for the following side of a cyclone is often less deep than the advancing side ; then it subsided to a "whole gale," and by two o'clock the *Jaguar*, a sorry wreck, was wallowing helplessly in the great mountainous swell, the moon and stars were shining, and a sweet, fresh breeze was coming from north-west.

Some fore- and aft-sails were speedily set to steady the ship ; the boatswain and a number of men cut away the remains of the wreck of the mizen-mast, which they had only partially succeeded in doing, in spite of their plucky efforts, after the mast went over the side, and, indeed, the big spar, banging under the ship's quarter, had done considerable damage.

Poor Captain Bob had been found at last—wedged in partly under one of the guns, where he had been flung by that awful sea, stunned and drowned. There was nothing to be done but to carry him down below and lay him decently in the swinging cot.

There was no rest for any of the wearied, sea-soaked crew.

The pumps must be manned, and much water got rid of before steam could be got up, for the stoke-hold was afloat. Then the screw had to be lowered into its place, the wreck cleared aloft, the lumber removed from the deck, the dead laid out, and the muster-roll called.

It was late in the afternoon before steam was up and

the course set for Bermuda ; and first there was a solemn ceremony to be gone through. Five bodies, besides the captain's, were brought up and laid by the open gangway, the crew standing uncovered in a dead silence, broken only by the wash of the sea alongside, and an occasional gush of steam as the ship rolled. Each was sewn up in a hammock and weighted with a couple of shot at the feet.

Number One read the funeral service, his voice trembling a little, and at the words " We therefore commit their bodies to the deep," each in turn was tilted up, and splashed audibly alongside.

Then the engine-room gong rang " Full speed ahead," and the battered ship proceeded on her way.

Poor Bob Gilroy had committed his last mistake, and paid for it with his life.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE "MAGPIE"

ABOUT the last day of August, in the year 1826, an English merchant vessel arrived at Havana, and conveyed on board H.M.S. *Pylades* two wretched-looking, sea-soaked men, sore and sick from many hours of immersion in salt water and from terrible mental strain.

These men were Mr. Charles McLean, mate, and William Meldrum, gunner's mate—a seaman petty officer—late of the man-of-war schooner *Magpie*. Mr. McLean was so overcome by his terrible experiences as to be partially demented, and did not for some days recover his balance of mind.

The tragic circumstances under which they came to be in this deplorable condition, I will now relate.

The *Magpie*, a schooner, such as was employed in those days in the suppression of piracy and the protection of British interests on the coasts of the West Indian islands, was cruising, on the 27th of August, 1826, off the north coast of Cuba, not far from Havana. Her commander, Lieutenant Edward Smith, had got news of a pirate having been seen off the western end of the island, and purposed immediately going in pursuit.

At 8 p.m. the schooner was under moderate canvas, with the wind in the west, and therefore contrary, and was sailing "close-hauled"—as near the wind as possible—on the port tack. The weather was fine at that time, but not without indications of becoming unsettled and squally, as is so frequently the case in this locality—the old Bahama channel. Lieutenant Smith had himself taken charge of the deck from six to eight o'clock, when he was relieved by William Meldrum, a skilful and careful seaman, who was entrusted with the duties

of officer of the watch, with orders to inform the commander immediately should any material change in the weather, or other emergency, render it advisable.

Occasion for this arose about nine o'clock, when the wind shifted to south, coming off the land—more favourable, of course, for the schooner, sailing to the westward; but the change was accompanied by the gathering of black clouds over the island. The wind began to freshen in squalls, and Meldrum, not liking the look of things, called Lieutenant Smith, who directed him to shorten sail, which he immediately did, taking in the foresail and jib, and thus leaving the vessel under reefed mainsail, single-reefed foretopsail and forestaysail. The foretopsail was a square sail, like those of a ship, the staysail a three-cornered one, set on the forestay, and the mainsail a gaff sail, like that of any schooner yacht.

Lieutenant Smith, knowing the treacherous nature of the weather, came on deck a few minutes later, and, after looking round, ordered all hands on deck, and lowered and stowed the big mainsail. This left the schooner under very easy sail—only the reefed foretopsail and forestaysail—and the mainsail not being set, she would very readily obey her helm, and run off the wind in case of an unusually heavy squall. Certainly every seamanlike precaution had been taken against possible mishap, and, with the wind still on the port side, off the land, the vessel proceeded safely, if slowly, on her course.

And then there suddenly occurred one of those entirely unexpected catastrophes which seamen have to reckon among the chances of their lives.

Without a moment's warning, about half-past nine or soon after, the wind shifted to the northward in a tremendous squall, with thunder and lightning—a squall, while it lasted, of almost hurricane force. Had it come off the land, the matter would have been simple enough. Meldrum would have cried, "Hard up with the helm!" and the vessel would have been run off the wind until the full force of it was over; but, coming from the other direction, the wind caught the sails aback, immediately stopping the schooner's way, and throwing her

over on her port side. There was no time to do anything. In a moment she heeled over, over, until the bulwarks were immersed; further over yet, and the sea was halfway across the deck, pouring down an open hatchway.

Mr. McLean, who was on the sick-list, and had come on deck for a breath of fresh air before turning in, went below on account of the rain, the wind being then still off the land. He tells us, however, that he immediately called Mr. Ross, another mate, who promptly went on deck—the orders being, no doubt, that, although the gunner's mate might be entrusted with a watch, in case of unusual circumstances a responsible commissioned officer was to assume charge. This is the only reason I can imagine for Mr. Ross being called on deck: Mr. McLean probably made some remark about the weather looking "very dirty"; and he must himself have been impressed with this idea, for he promptly turned and followed his brother-officer up the ladder.

Before he could set foot on the deck the squall was screaming overhead, the schooner was practically on her beam ends, the water pouring down the hatchway, the inky darkness intensified in succession to the blinding glare of the lightning.

Lieutenant Smith contrived to get on deck, and shouted to cut the fore-rigging, which Meldrum was already endeavouring to do, in the hope of causing the mast to give way, and thus relieve the vessel, but all to no purpose—the *Magpie* was doomed, and in three minutes she sank from under them, carrying down with her all who were below, and the greater number of those on deck.

The squall appears to have subsided as suddenly as it arose. Mr. McLean, finding a couple of oars floating close beside him as he swam, placed them under his arms, and proceeded to get rid of some of his clothing. He tells us that there was for some minutes a terrible silence—"there was not a voice to be heard on the surface." Then some one called out, "Is there any more?" He cried, "Yes, there is one!" and, still keeping hold of the oars, made his way towards the sound.

Meldrum, also swimming in the darkness, heard the question, and these two quickly reached the schooner's small boat, bottom up, already supporting Lieutenant Smith and six seamen.

They contrived to right the boat, and placed the oars across her; but she was full of water, and the nine men clinging to her gunwale depressed her below the surface.

Here they hung on through the night. The boat, a very small one, barely supported them in her water-logged condition, and, as Mr. McLean says, "kept turning over and over, which very much distressed us." The commander, preserving his courage and presence of mind in an heroic degree, kept on encouraging the men, telling them they were sure to be picked up in the morning.

Daylight, however, not only failed to bring any hope of this, but added a new terror; sharks were assembling round them, eager for their prey, and so bold were they, and so deeply was the boat immersed, that Mr. McLean tells us that "they frequently passed over the boat between us whilst resting on the gunwale."

A more horrible situation it would be difficult to imagine: these nine hopeless men, with the utmost difficulty keeping themselves afloat, and not knowing at what moment any one of them might be seized by the terrible voracious monsters which swam between and below them, frequently touching them as they passed. Small wonder if reason and strength failed them under such awful conditions; and about ten o'clock in the forenoon two seamen let go their precarious hold and disappeared.

Lieutenant Smith had, at this time, according to Mr. McLean, been twice bitten by a shark; but he continued to preserve a courageous demeanour, and, though he was so exhausted that he could scarcely speak, he shook hands with some of them, told Meldrum to "give his best respects to the Admiral, and tell him that no blame attached to any one for the loss of the schooner"; and also spoke to a lad named Wilson, an exceptionally strong and courageous young fellow,

who appeared most likely to survive, and gave him a message for the Admiral, "that he was going to San Antonio for a pirate, and also requested that he would promote Meldrum to a gunner."

Such amazing fortitude and self-forgetfulness appears almost incredible under the circumstances; but this is the tale which is told by Mr. McLean on oath at the subsequent court-martial.

The disappearance of the two unhappy seamen somewhat relieved the boat, and they were able to free her of some of the water; two more fell off about three o'clock, unable longer to sustain the mental and physical strain.

An hour later, the boat having been further bailed, Meldrum suggested that their heroic and dying chief should be lifted and placed in the stern. The others immediately consented to this generous proposal, and they contrived to carry it out; but about sunset the boat was accidentally capsized once more—or lurched over so far as to be in immediate danger of capsizing—and as they strove to right her again, Meldrum exclaimed, "Mr. McLean, the commander is gone!" It was so—he had rolled out of the boat, and was seen no more.

Night again came on. Two men were now left besides the officer and the gunner's mate, but they were in the last stage of exhaustion, and during the long night both disappeared. The sharks had left them some time previously, but there was, of course, the constant dread of their return.

The two survivors were now able to get into the boat, "one forward and the other aft," says Mr. McLean, which shows how small she was, and also completely waterlogged. She was, perhaps, leaky from being sun-dried; if she has not been used for some time, the fiery sun in that latitude will soon open a boat's seams, when she is not afloat.

So these two men awaited the dawn. Would this day bring relief? They could scarcely hope to survive another night. But deliverance was at hand—a sail, a brig, was in sight, steering so as to pass close to them. They shook hands in an ecstasy of joy and relief, and watched her coming nearer.

They had no means of attracting attention, and a little boat, flush with the surface, is easily missed.

When only about a mile distant, the brig altered her course slightly, so that she would pass further from them. The wind, no doubt, was light, and the vessel's progress slow, or the desperate measure now adopted by Meldrum would have been utterly futile.

Without a moment's hesitation he left the boat, and swam to intercept the brig. He must have been a man of rare strength to be capable of such an effort, after all he had gone through; but he did it, and, marvellous to relate, he was successful—contriving to approach within hail, while McLean stood up in the frail boat raising his hands.

They were heard and seen, and in a few minutes were safely on board the American brig *Aspasia*, from which they were next morning transhipped to an English vessel, bound for Havana, where they were received on board the *Pylades*—Mr. McLean's own ship, from which he had been lent to the *Magpie* a short while previously to replace a sick officer.

In due course, according to the rules of the service, a court-martial was held at Port Royal, on board H.M.S. *Magnificent*—that same ship which her former captain, John Hayes, so skilfully preserved from disaster on the coast of France in 1812*—to try the survivors for the loss of their ship. The verdict was, of course, an honourable acquittal of all blame, and the court commented with warm appreciation upon the conduct of Lieutenant Smith and the two survivors. The dying recommendation of the brave commander was not, we may be sure, disregarded, and Meldrum no doubt was soon promoted to the rank of warrant officer.

Such is the sad story of the loss of the *Magpie*, gathered entirely from the evidence of Mr. McLean and William Meldrum at the court-martial, and therefore as true as it is tragic.

You will, no doubt, agree with me that the plain facts, as here narrated, constitute a sufficiently moving tale; and yet it

* See page 167.

has been considered justifiable, in a version which you may perhaps come across, to introduce a number of details for which there is no warrant, and which, in some respects, are absurd and impossible.

Mr. McLean states, you will recollect, that Lieutenant Smith had twice been bitten by a shark; in this other version it is stated that, while he hung on to the boat, first one leg, and presently the other, was bitten off by a shark, but that he said nothing about it, continuing to maintain his position—an absurdity from more than one point of view. In the first place, a shark's jaws and teeth are not fitted for biting a limb clean off in this fashion; they are adapted for tearing away the flesh, stripping it from the bones: no doubt, however, a big shark could actually, by sheer force, tear off a limb in the process. Imagine a man being able to retain his hold of the boat, as described, while this was done! Of course, he would be dragged away under water, and torn in pieces in a minute or two. But, even supposing that his legs could thus be bitten off, how long would he retain strength and consciousness to hold on while all the blood in his body was being pumped away through the severed arteries?

People are very fond of telling wonderful shark stories, but as a rule they are quite impossible. Mr. McLean states, when upon his oath, that his chief had been twice bitten, so we must believe that he knew it for a fact. What, then, is the explanation?

Well, you must not imagine, when you are told that there were a number of sharks about, that they were all monsters of fifteen or twenty feet in length. I have seen a good many sharks caught, and the biggest was thirteen feet long—though I have certainly seen some in the water which must have been nearer twenty feet. There are, however, many varieties of sharks, and some are quite small; also, there are plenty of half-grown sharks about, which are voracious enough, but which would certainly not attack a live man swimming or kicking out. We may conclude, therefore, that the sharks which clustered about the *Magpie's* boat were

mostly small ones—I do not quite see how they could otherwise have passed over the boat, between the men, as stated.

One of these, perhaps five or six feet long, may have torn and lacerated Lieutenant Smith's legs as he hung, exhausted, on the gunwale of the boat; it is curious that no mention is made of any one else being bitten. Of course, directly the unhappy men let go, and sank helpless, they would immediately be attacked by large and small, and speedily torn in pieces.

I remember upon one occasion, when becalmed one afternoon in the Pacific Ocean, there were an immense number of sharks about, and the bluejackets were hauling them in as fast as they could put their lines over; but not one of them was over five feet long, and the great majority were much smaller—there was not a big one to be seen.

The moral is, that all shark stories should be received with great caution.

CUTTING OUT THE "CHEVRETTE"

THIS is the story of one of those remarkable exploits with which the history of the Royal Navy teems during our wars with France and Spain: exploits which we may, without undue vanity, describe as essentially British, for certainly no other nation has attempted them in anything approaching a like degree, and I believe I am correct in stating that no British man-of-war has ever been captured in this manner.

"Cutting out" an enemy's vessel means, that she is captured and brought out from her own anchorage by boats from the opposing fleet, and this was frequently effected by our officers and men in spite of the enemy's full knowledge of the intended attack, and elaborate preparations to resist it. A cutting-out expedition was, of course, almost invariably planned as a surprise, under cover of darkness; but circumstances constantly rendered this impossible, and the attack, commenced in secret, has frequently been discovered by the enemy long before our boats could get alongside, and so they have advanced under a tremendous fire of grape and musketry, to find the ship protected by strong nettings and other obstacles, and the frequently very numerous crew awaiting them with long sharp pikes, pistols, axes, and every kind of hand-to-hand weapon, and yet they have prevailed.

The capture of the French corvette, *Chevrette*, was a very remarkable instance of the pluck, skill, and pertinacity of British bluejackets under such circumstances.

In the month of July, 1801, three British frigates—the *Doris*, Captain Charles Brisbane, the *Beaulieu*, Captain

Stephen Pointz, and *Uranie*, Captain George Henry Gage—were stationed off Point St. Mathieu, outside Brest, to watch the French and Spanish fleets, moored in that harbour. You will find Point St. Mathieu in any good-sized map; it is on the south side of that projecting piece of France, on the north coast, off which is the island of Ushant, that well-known landmark to seamen approaching the English Channel from the Bay of Biscay, and is distant about twelve sea miles from the anchorage and dockyard of Brest. This magnificent harbour is partially formed by a peninsular much resembling Denmark in form, which juts up from the southern shore, leaving a comparatively narrow approach, little over one mile in width; and a fleet anchored inside was, of course, absolutely secure from attack, the land defences, as well as the ships' guns, completely commanding the approaches.

The three British frigates, lying at anchor some three miles south of Point St. Mathieu, were in a position to see right into Brest harbour, and note immediately any movement of the enemy's fleet; and they were also in full view of the little bay of Camaret, which you will probably not find marked on your map, but which is situated outside the great harbour, just at the base of that Denmark-like peninsular above mentioned—a snug little bay, opening nearly due north, and some six miles distant from our little group of frigates.

One fine morning the vigilant eyes of the British officers discovered, securely moored in this little bay of Camaret, under the protection of some shore-batteries, a fine French corvette—in fact, the *Chevrette*. Why she was sent there, the French admiral knew best; but she was evidently considered to be quite safe, in spite of the proximity of the three British vessels, for any attempt on their part to approach her would immediately be seen from the fleet, and a much stronger force could be sent out to deal with them.

The British captains, however, did not like this arrangement: the French corvette, to their eyes, represented a sort of defiance—"touch-me-if-you-dare" kind of business; and so they resolved to cut her out.

The *Uranie* being absent on some other business, the boats of the *Beaulieu* and *Doris*, manned by volunteers for this special service, prepared for the attack ; but the admiral—the Hon. Sir William Cornwallis—of the Channel Fleet, under whose orders the frigates were, must have been consulted, for he sent Lieutenant Woodley Losack, of his flagship, to command the expedition—flagship officers being given preference when such little treats were going.

On the 20th of July the boats started, aiming, of course, to attack during the night ; but there was some misunderstanding, the boats became separated, and those which reached Camaret Bay first waited in vain for the remainder—waited, indeed, too long, for it was daylight before they decided to return, and the Frenchmen naturally took in the whole business. Knowing the dangerous nature of an attack by British boats, the captain of the *Chevette* ran considerably closer in shore, moored his ship under some heavy batteries, took on board a number of soldiers, making up his fighting strength to about 350 men, loaded his guns with ample charges of grape-shot, and made every possible preparation to give the English a warm reception. The shore-batteries were likewise strengthened, and a gun-vessel was moored in the entrance of the bay—all of which was really very complimentary to the British, who could only attack in boats. Having done all he knew, the French captain, somewhat vain-gloriously, hoisted a large French ensign above an English one, in full view of the three frigates—the *Uranie* having then returned.

When the British seamen realised this very decided and certainly too “previous” act of defiance, they swore to reverse the position of those flags ; and about 9.30 p.m. the boats of the frigates, together with the barge and the pinnace of the *Robust*, a 74-gun ship, started upon this dangerous enterprise. There were fifteen boats in all, containing about 280 men, and Lieutenant Losack, as before, was in command. The officers and men were well aware, of course, that all chance of a surprise attack was over. They had a six-mile pull before them, and the wind, from north-east, was fresh and adverse ; so there

was a good deal of work to be got through before the fighting commenced.

They had not covered much ground when a boat was discerned—a boat from the shore, and probably a lookout from Camaret Bay. Lieutenant Losack, not wishing this scout to run back and give warning of his approach, gave chase with his own and five other boats—surely an excessive number; one would imagine that two of the fastest boats in his flotilla would have sufficed to tackle the stranger. For this apparent error in judgment he was destined to suffer the loss of all participation in the assault.

By his orders the other boats lay on their oars, awaiting his return. It was long delayed, and it is a bad thing to keep men waiting when they are on this sort of business. Lieutenant Keith Maxwell, of the *Beaulieu*, speedily became heartily sick of hanging about; he was the next in seniority, and at length he ordered the boats of his own ship to give way, and the others followed. The wind had now fallen and the moon was setting, so the circumstances were more favourable.

Arriving off the mouth of the bay, Maxwell waited until all the boats came up. There was no sign of Losack; the other officers were undecided how to act in his absence: it was a moment in which a fearless man, not afraid of responsibility, would find his opportunity, and Maxwell was equal to the occasion. He had but nine boats, and about 180 men; but he hailed all those within hearing, and he sent a midshipman round to the remainder, calling upon them, in the King's name, to follow him.

They did not hesitate; and as they rowed round the headland into the bay, Lieutenant Maxwell detected a light south wind coming up—that is to say, blowing right out from the anchorage. With a true seaman's instinct he instantly comprehended the advantage which this would give him. As they pulled in, he told off his men—some to cut the corvette's cable, some of the smartest topmen to fight their way aloft and loose the sails, a steady old quartermaster to take the helm—

he would sail her out, even while his other hands strove for the possession of the deck.

The Frenchmen sighted the boats at the distance of half a mile, and immediately a most tremendous fire was opened by the corvette and the shore batteries—round- and grape-shot, and musketry. Oars were smashed, men rolled over in twos and threes; still they raced for the ship—Lieutenant Neville, in charge of the boats of the *Uranie*, standing up in the stern cheering his men on. They all remembered those ensigns, and meant to have them “t’other way about.”

The *Beaulieu*’s boats, the gallant Maxwell leading, boarded on the starboard side, the others on the port side; but it seemed impossible that they could ever gain the deck. A crowd of men, armed with pikes and cutlasses, met them everywhere—the boarding nettings foiled them, a hail of bullets at close quarters still peppered them. Their sharp cutlasses, however, disposed of the nettings, and soon a number of men gained a footing on board. Nor did the “specialists” neglect their duties. Some were cutting away at the thick hemp cables; the topmen, literally fighting their way, got aloft somehow, many of them streaming with blood; the staunch quartermaster, sorely wounded, made good his way to the helm; while the bulk of the British officers and men engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand conflict with overwhelming odds.

The men aloft found that the Frenchmen had provided even against this bold step—the foot-ropes, hanging below the yards at a convenient distance for a man to stand upon, had been “stopped” close up to the yards, and so were not available. There was no time to lose; cutlass in hand, or held in their teeth, the English seamen crawled out upon the yards and cut the gaskets. *In less than three minutes*, we are told, from the time the boats got alongside, and while the terrible conflict on deck was at its height, almost half of the British seamen killed or wounded, the cable was severed, and at the same moment the topsails and courses—the principal sails—fell loose from the yards; the vessel immediately commenced slowly to forge ahead, the man at the wheel steering her out.

The Frenchmen, hearing the flutter of the loosened canvas, looked round in dismay—some actually jumped overboard in a panic, most of the others flew below and commenced firing up the hatchways. The deck was soon in possession of the British, who now proceeded to set the sails properly; but it was necessary to clear away the dead bodies, French and English, before they could work the ropes. Many were thrown overboard, for it was no time for being squeamish—the men below were not yet subdued, the breeze was failing, the ship was still under the fire of the batteries.

They contrived to get all sail on the ship, one half keeping the foe at bay; but the shot from the batteries still flew round her, crashing into her hull or damaging the sails and rigging. The boats were not available for towing, those that were not disabled and hampered with wounded men being engaged in rescuing the others.

Slowly, under a reviving breath of wind from north-east—lucky it had not come from there before!—the corvette weathered the headland; the Frenchmen below at length surrendered—the capture was complete, and the British ensign floated above the tri-colour; and then there arrived Lieutenant Losack, with his six boats. How disgusted he must have been!

Dawn revealed a terrible scene of carnage—seventy-six British and one hundred and fifty-four Frenchmen were killed or disabled—and it also revealed to the Spanish and French fleets the unpleasant spectacle of the *Chevrette*, which everybody had imagined to be perfectly secure in Camaret Bay, sailing out under British colours!

Here was a fine specimen, then, of a "cutting-out" expedition. Probably it was never beaten as a piece of sheer desperate fighting, combined with skilful organisation and presence of mind.

Some instances of individual heroism are on record. Lieutenant Sinclair, of the marines, gave his life in defending a midshipman, Mr. Crofton, who was badly wounded. Mr. John Brown, boatswain of the *Beaulieu*, managed to climb into the corvette's quarter-gallery—a small projecting room opening

off the cabin—but found the inner door securely barricaded, while through the chinks he saw a number of men armed with cutlasses and pistols, who “annoyed” him considerably while he attempted to break in, so he climbed over on to the upper deck, where he found himself isolated from his party, who were fighting further forward. He was in an unpleasantly warm corner, a mark for the enemy’s pistols and muskets, so, flourishing his cutlass, he cried, “Make a lane, there!” and actually fought his way through, joined his officer, and cleared the enemy off the forecastle.

You will be surprised to learn that Lieutenant Losack received his promotion for this affair, “through some misunderstanding respecting the actual commanding officer at the cutting out of the corvette”—a misunderstanding which, I think you will agree, he could very readily have cleared up. However, some one got the ear of the Admiral later on, and he ordered an inquiry, with the result that the gallant and perhaps too generous Maxwell was immediately promoted—as he well deserved to be; nor should the name of the heroic quartermaster remain unrecorded—Henry Wallis, wounded and bleeding, refused to quit the post which had been assigned to him by his superior until he had steered the prize out of fire of the shore batteries.

A PIRATE-SLAVER

This is a true story of the capture of a Spanish slaver by a man-of-war schooner. It is told by an officer of the "Pickle," and I do not think I can improve upon his narration; so here it is, in his own words.

WE were stationed in his Majesty's schooner *Pickle*, to cruise off the north-east part of Cuba, for the purpose of intercepting slavers from the coast of Africa, and to do our best to suppress piracy. It was about six in the morning of the 5th of June (1829), when we were about three leagues to the north-west of Port Naranjos, that we discovered a strange sail to the eastward of us, which we soon made out to be a large schooner, with two topsails,* and, in nautical phraseology, a very suspicious-looking craft. About an hour after we had begun to calculate on a prize, she hauled in to the land, a manœuvre which would enable her to land her crew and slaves if we gave chase to her. So we very prudently hauled off, to decoy her as she hauled in. The *ruse* succeeded, for we had the satisfaction of seeing her resume her former course. This being settled, we quietly tacked, and endeavoured to get between her and the land; but of course we took no notice of her, and pretended to be after other game, to prevent her suspecting what we were about. It was fortunate we did so, for we afterwards found that he had taken a pilot on board the day before, who knew very well all about the *Pickle*. It was not very long before we

* That is, a topsail on the mainmast as well as on the foremast: rather an unusual rig for a schooner, but adopted by some of the fast slavers and pirates.

succeeded in getting between the stranger and the land, and having her in the wind's eye of us, just where we wished, we threw off all disguise at once, and tacked, shifted the jib, got up the maintopmast, and, with our flying jib-boom out, made all the sail we could in chase of her. This astonished our new friend, who, we afterwards found, had mistaken us for a drogher* (a coasting craft), and the effect on him was to make him haul his wind on the starboard tack (wind at N.E.).

We were now fairly in chase, and all was excitement on board the *Pickle*. Away we went, dashing along at a fine rate by the wind (our best point of sailing), both weathering and fore-reaching on the stranger. We were busy all day in tacking, wetting our sails, altering our trim,† by shifting heavy weights, so that it should not be our fault if the *Pickle* did not come up with her chase; and willing enough was she to second our design. As we had approached the chase near enough by four in the afternoon, we showed her our colours, and very politely called her attention to the flag of old England with a shot; and, in order to remove all doubts respecting us, as she might not be able to distinguish it after dark, we took care to follow up the complement by sunset with several more. Of these the stranger took no notice, although (as we since learned) her crew formally requested their captain to bear down and engage us; but his reply was, "not while there is a chance of avoiding it."

* This is further explained in Lieutenant McHardy's official journal, in which he states that he disguised his vessel. This was apparently done by sending down the maintopmast, substituting a smaller spar for the long jib-boom, with a small jib; and, no doubt, by also concealing the guns as far as possible, covering them up, and making them look like some sort of deck cargo. This expedient was frequently resorted to in those days, sometimes with much larger vessels than the *Pickle*. It is not unknown, even in these modern times; cruisers have been disguised to look like merchant steamers during our naval manœuvres, and I think it was also done in the Spanish-American war of 1898.

† Wetting the sails makes them "draw" better, especially in a light wind; and an immense difference may result in a sailing vessel from careful "trimming"—sometimes a good knot more speed.

As the evening closed in serene and beautiful, we continued working up under the lee of our friend, so as to get as near him as we could before dark, that we might better keep sight of him after the moon had set. It was well we did so, for it was not without manœuvring that we managed to keep him to windward of us. At one time it became so dark that we had nearly lost sight of him, and should certainly have done so, had it not been for one of our men, James Stewart, a fellow who has the eye of a hawk. At about a quarter after eleven matters began to be serious. It was evident that we were closing fast with the stranger, and preparations were accordingly made for action. The topsail-sheets were stoppered, gaff and yards slung, and, everything being in fighting-trim, we sent a warning shot over him, keeping the squaresail ready for running up again if required. We were then going seven knots, when the slaver (for such she proved to be) shortened sail, and bore down on us in regular "man-o'-war style." It was evidently his intention to pass under our stern, for the purpose of engaging us. This was readily seen, and prevented by our heaving-in stays, and, while we lay snug at our quarters, our commander hailed him twice, without receiving a reply. The third time he was hailed, finding by our manœuvres that he had no chance of escape, he returned us his broadside and a fire of musketry for an answer. With the exception of mortally wounding a seaman named Laden, this did us no material injury. But if we had been trifling with him before, we now set to work in earnest. "Mr. Fowell," said our commander to the senior mate, who had charge of the long gun, "take care to depress your fire, and don't throw away your shot." "I'll take care, sir, not to spoil her maintopsail," was the quaint reply of the officer, "for I know you want to rig our craft into a two-topsail schooner."

We now reserved our fire until we were close on his larboard quarter, when we saluted him with the contents of our long gun and carronade, both prepared for the occasion, with an additional charge of a canister of musket-balls. The

action now became warm, our guns being directed principally at the slaver's spars, so as to prevent his escape ; we believing him to be a pirate, from the circumstance of his having hitherto shown no colours. The scene was now splendid beyond description. The moon had set, and a light breeze was blowing. We could just distinguish the figure of the long, low, black vessel we were engaging as she moved round us ; except when, by the occasional blazes from her sides on the discharge of her guns, she was distinctly visible. From the crowded state of her decks, and the confusion we observed on board of her, it was evident our shot were not thrown away ; nor, indeed, was the fire from her musketry, for the *Pickle* having no bulwark, the effects were severely felt among our men. The slaughter among our crew would have been greater, had they not been trained to work the guns in a crouching position ; and the head-braces worked on the lower deck.

The action continued within pistol shot for an hour and twenty minutes, at the end of which we had the satisfaction of seeing the slaver's mainmast fall. It had been shot away about six feet above the deck. The noise of its fall was followed by a voice hailing us from the slaver's deck : that he had not a sail standing, that he had several shot through his foremast, and most of his fore-rigging cut away ; that the captain was wounded and in bed, the crew killed or wounded ; that he was wounded and had surrendered. On this Lieutenant McHardy ordered him to send a boat on board the *Pickle* ; but he replied it was impossible, from his crippled condition, and not having one that would swim. We then ordered him to keep near us till daylight, when we should take possession of him. This being the case, we cautioned him against firing another musket, and threatened him with no quarter if he did so.

In the meantime it had fallen calm, and our sweeps were got out, to keep a commanding position over our prize, and to take possession of her at daylight. We lost no time in repairing damages, which, after a contest with so superior and determined an enemy, were not little. Our sails, rigging, and spars were much injured, and two of our three guns were disabled. The

care of the wounded was our next concern, for our indefatigable assistant-surgeon had been unable effectually to attend to them during the action, as the concussion of our long gun prevented a light being kept burning below. Those of the crew who were most severely wounded were as soon as possible conveyed to the commander's cabin, which was given up entirely to them. And it is a singular circumstance that the four men who lost their lives in the action formed his gig's crew. One of these poor fellows, named Horner, the only one who was killed instantly, had behaved most gallantly. His corpse was, after the action, committed to the deep, the funeral service being read over it by Lieutenant McHardy.

By daylight we had shifted our mainsail, and, with the exception of our guns, had repaired all material damages ; and it was well we were ready, for, notwithstanding the caution we had given the prize, he was for escaping, if possible. For the first time we now observed him show Spanish colours in his fore-rigging ; he had managed to sheet home his foretopsail, and thought to creep away from us. This was no sooner perceived than our squaresail was set, and we soon ranged down on his larboard quarter with every man at his station that could go to it. Mr. Fowell was now dispatched to take possession of the prize, and sent back her commander and principal officers. On boarding the slaver, the Spanish ensign was immediately hauled down, and the boat soon returned with a party, among whom was her captain, a morose, dark-coloured man, with an ill-favoured countenance, bespeaking a soul fit for "murders, stratagem, and crimes." In fact, he had been outlawed from his own country, rendered incapable of commanding any vessel under the Spanish flag, in consequence of having been the captain of a pirate. Therefore, although the captain of this vessel, he could not appear on her papers as such. As he stepped on the quarter-deck of the *Pickle*, his look well expressed his surprise and disappointment at being captured by a vessel so inferior in force to his own ; but this was no time for indulging in such feelings. He had been

severely wounded by the fall of the mast, and his first care was to request our surgeon to examine his head. He was subsequently sent by us to the prison hospital at Havana, where he died ; thus terminated the career of a man who had already violated all laws, and was carrying on the inhuman traffic of dealing in slaves. Our opponent proved to be the *Boladera*, generally known as the notorious *Mulatto*, which memorandum was made on her papers. She was a two-topsail schooner from the coast of Africa, pierced for sixteen guns, mounting two long eighteen-pounders and two long twelves, with a crew of sixty-two picked men (fourteen of whom were wounded and ten killed), besides a cargo of three hundred and thirty-five slaves. She measured ninety-four feet in length on deck, and two hundred and thirty-five tons English.

The *Boladera* was now our own, but she was an unmanageable wreck ; so, as soon as possible, we took her in tow. Our next care was to secure her only remaining mast (the foremast), it being so much wounded as to leave no chance of its standing even in a moderate breeze. We also transferred about one hundred slaves to the *Pickle*, and some of the crew, confining the others where the slaves, now removed to the *Pickle*, had been imprisoned. We were under the necessity of doing this, for they had taken care to throw the irons overboard which had been used to confine the slaves, in order that they might not be appropriated to themselves. Here we were with prisoners (exclusive of slaves), a lawless set of rascals, amounting in number to more than double that of our own effective crew, and some of them infuriated by spirits. These pretty fellows we had to secure without irons—a rather nervous matter ; but we had to finish yet the matter we had begun, and this was only a small part of it. Lieutenant McHardy, however, was a match for them. One of his precautions was to throw overboard all the ammunition that was on board the prize, so that in the event of the prisoners rising against the mate (Mr. Fowell) and his small party in possession of her, they might be rendered incapable of defending themselves against the *Pickle*. You are aware that the *Pickle* measures one

hundred and twenty tons, that at the commencement of the action we mounted one long eighteen-pounder pivot gun, with two eighteen-pounder carronades, and had a crew of thirty-nine, including officers, six small boys, and two disabled men. We lost during the action one man killed and ten wounded, three of whom have died since.

The slaver was severely cut up by the shot from our pivot gun, every one of which told—at least, so said her sides, spars, rigging, and sails when exposed by daylight, the latter being shot through in all directions, much to the disappointment of Mr. Fowell, who was not a little anxious from the commencement to appropriate one to the use of the *Pickle*. According to Mr. Fowell's report, the state of the *Boladera*, when he first boarded her, resembled more that of a pirate than a slaver. Many of the crew and the negroes were drunk, some just able and others unable to reel about her deck, which, being also strewn with rigging, wounded spars, dismantled guns, and wounded men, presented a sad picture of disorder and wretchedness.

As it was necessary to make for the first port, both for the purpose of securing the prisoners better and to obtain water previous to going to Havana, Lieut. McHardy determined on steering for Xibarra in Cuba, where, with our prize in tow, we anchored on the evening of the seventh. Here we set to work in rigging jurymasts for the *Boladera* and making stocks to secure the prisoners in. In this we had much difficulty, from the circumstance of the Spanish authorities of the port refusing us the slightest assistance and the feeling evinced by the inhabitants in favour of their countrymen, so that the greatest caution was necessary on our part. Having arranged matters in spite of them, we started from Xibarra with our prize, and succeeded in arriving here (Havana) without any particular difficulty. Our crew being much reduced after manning the prize, our commander took some of the male slaves on board the *Pickle* and clothed them, to assist in navigating her. These fellows, from their very great expertness in musketry, corroborated the information we had received

of a number of them having been trained and used during the action as small-arm men against the *Pickle*.

Having gone through the necessary form of condemning our prize before the mixed commissioners for that purpose appointed, and delivered her and the prisoners and slaves to the Spanish Governor, we sailed in the morning.

This very complete and simple tale shows that it might be no child's play in those days to tackle a slaver. Let us hope that the *Pickles* received a good sum as prize-money—they had certainly earned it.

THE GHOST-BOAT

A STORY OF A WARNING AT SEA

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

THE *Dragonfly* was homeward bound from the China Station, after a very long absence from England. This was some sixty years ago, or more, in the early part of the reign of Queen Victoria, when steam had already been largely introduced among men-of-war, but sailing ships had by no means disappeared.

The *Dragonfly* was a man-of-war brig. Boys who are fond of reading sea yarns will probably know what a brig is, but for the benefit of those who do not, it may be explained that she has two masts, both fully rigged with yards, etc. The brigs of those days were very heavily masted—in fact, they were often termed “sea-coffins,” owing to the danger of their being dismasted and foundering in a sudden heavy squall or violent storm—and the *Dragonfly* was no exception to this rule; moreover, her captain—Commander Stewart Wilson—was a most reckless individual in the matter of “carrying on,” more especially when he had had rather more liquor than was good for him, which, unhappily, was too frequently the case. On such occasions he would keep on sail, with a freshening wind, in spite of some remonstrance from his first lieutenant, until the brig was lying over with the muzzles of her lee guns almost under water; and yet he had had the good luck to escape disaster, during this long commission of four years and more: some men are born lucky.

The commander was always known as “Toby” Wilson; I

really cannot tell you why: it may have been something in the cast of his features. Sailors are very apt at finding nicknames for their superiors and associates, and you may be sure there was something about him which suggested "Toby"; I will leave you to imagine what it may have been.

Now, Toby was not a favourite with his subordinates; he was a bully, with a very rough tongue, and there was something about him also that made people afraid of him. For you must not imagine that a bully is necessarily a coward—Toby was no such thing, and would have fought his ship like a hero, had opportunity presented itself; still, he was a very unpleasant captain, and was cordially hated.

Nevertheless, like a good many men who are disliked afloat, he could make himself very agreeable on shore, and before he sailed on this long cruise he had married a beautiful Irish girl; indeed, at this very time, when he was homeward bound, he had a little daughter over three years of age, whom he had never seen, and so he was in a hurry, and was very much annoyed when, some distance south of the island of St. Helena, the south-east trade wind, which should have been blowing him merrily homewards, failed altogether, and left the brig in a dead calm, with the topsails banging uselessly against the masts as she rolled helplessly in the long swell—a state of affairs which is very liable to bring out a bad temper, and cause a seaman to appear at his worst.

Commander Toby Wilson was in a shocking temper, and had been drinking a good deal of brandy and water over his solitary dinner, which did not, in his case, improve matters at all.

The *Dragonfly* had first been sent to the Pacific Station, going there, of course, round Cape Horn, and after a couple of years or so had been ordered across to China, whence she had come on her homeward voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, which is a very simple and obvious proceeding, as you will see if you look at the map of the world; so you may be surprised if I tell you that this simple fact afforded a grand opportunity for Toby, on this night of provoking calm, to

make himself particularly disagreeable—the day happening to be Christmas Eve.

The *Dragonfly*, by going out round Cape Horn, and coming home round the Cape of Good Hope, had, just on this particular day, completed the round of the circumference of the earth, sailing always to the westward ; for the meridian of Greenwich, from which British seamen, and a good many others, reckon their longitude, passes not far from St. Helena.

Now, time being reckoned, as we all know, by the sun, which always, owing to the rotation of the earth, rises somewhere in the east, it follows that, when you sail westwards, you are, so to speak, running away from the sun, and consequently losing time. When you have traversed fifteen degrees of longitude you will, in fact, have lost just one hour, and a very simple little sum will show you that, when you have sailed completely round the world, through 360 degrees of longitude, you will have lost twenty-four hours, or one whole day ; so that if you arrive again on the meridian of Greenwich at, say, midday on a Sunday, the Astronomer Royal and his assistants at Greenwich, who have not been doing any sailing, will make it midday on *Monday* ; and they are not going to put everybody out to suit your little ship, with a few score souls on board ; so what are you to do ? The only plan is to skip a day, and start fair again with Tuesday.

In like manner, if you sail round the world to the eastward—say round the Cape of Good Hope to Australia, and home round Cape Horn, which was the route of the old sailing clippers—you will be *gaining* time the whole voyage, and when you get back to the meridian of Greenwich, the Astronomer Royal will be one day behind you, and you will have to “mark time” for him to come up, by having two Sundays, or any day you like, in one week ; and it makes no difference, in either case, how “curly” your route may be, or how long you take about it, you will always be putting your clock forward, or backward, as the case may be, until it is twenty-four hours wrong.

Toby Wilson came on deck about eight o'clock, and looked round. It was pitch dark, with great masses of thundery clouds to the northward, and a sort of mist hanging low over the sea; there was not a breath of wind, and every sound seemed to be magnified fifty-fold in the weird silence of nature: the creak of the brig's timbers as she rolled, the rattle of blocks and cordage, the irritating "slatting" of the topsails against the mast, all sounded preternaturally loud; and when the marine sentry came up and struck eight bells, it seemed as though a thousand sea-sprites were ringing changes on it.

The men were loafing about on deck, in scarcely better temper than the captain. Some of them were "whistling for a wind," and an Irishman was "scratching the mast," which is another device for summoning a breeze; but the breeze did not come, and after the watch coming on duty had been mustered, the voice of the boatswain's mate echoing, as it seemed, from every point of the horizon, nearly all hands remained on deck, hoping for a change.

Suddenly the loud, rasping voice of the captain ran along the deck:

"Boatswain's mate!"

"Sir!" cried the man, as he ran aft. Most captains depute the first lieutenant to issue their orders to the ship's company, and this official was standing at the captain's elbow (he was known as "Jack Rags," for some reason); but this was one of Toby's little ways of making himself unpleasant. When he was not slanging his chief executive, he slighted him before all hands.

The boatswain's mate found the captain with some difficulty in the darkness, and received an order, uttered in a low tone of voice, which caused Jack Rags to pucker his lips in the manner of whistling. He made no sound, however, lest he should appear disrespectful.

This, you will recollect, was the 24th of December, and the clock was twenty-four hours slow on Greenwich. A day had to be dropped; and what was the skipper's selection? The

boat-swain's mate shall answer, after a long "pipe" to call attention:

"Now, d'ye hear there! To-morrow will be Wednesday, the twenty-sixth; there's no Tuesday this week!"

No Christmas Day! The device of dropping or adding a day was not, of course, unknown among the men, some of whom had been round the world before; but to cut out Christmas Day! They had been looking forward to having some sort of show. There was not a superfluity of luxuries on board, for they had not put in anywhere since Singapore; but an extra allowance of grog and some "plum duff," and songs on the forecastle, while the brig rolled along before the jolly trade-wind—this, at least, they had anticipated. But the trade-wind had deserted them for the time, and now they were not even to have Christmas Day. It was not so much the loss of their little convivialities, however, which enraged the crew, as the malignant, gratuitous spite of the skipper in selecting this day for rejection; and a dead silence, an ominous silence, ensued—a silence which was probably the prelude to a more or less mutinous outbreak.

But it was broken in another fashion, most unexpected; everybody heard it.

Every soul on deck, from the captain to the ship's boy, heard distinctly the most familiar sound of the thumping of the oars in the rowlocks, as a boat is propelled by some eight or ten strong rowers, keeping precise time: a man-of-war's boat, beyond all doubt—thump, thump—thump, thump—loud and clear.

"There's a boat away on the starboard beam, sir!" sang out the lookout-man on the starboard cat-head.

"Can you see her?" asked the first lieutenant.

"No, sir!"

Nobody could see her; but this was not surprising, as the mist would hide anything above three or four hundred yards' distant. And such a sound, in the dead stillness, would be easily audible at the distance of a mile or more.

Thump, thump—thump, thump; the men all crowded along

the starboard bulwarks, standing on anything handy, or climbing up to see over the hammock nettings, and a murmur of comment ran along.

"Shall we man the cutter, sir?" asked the first lieutenant.

"Yes—and load a gun with a blank charge," replied the captain.

"Aye, aye, sir! Boatswain's mate! Call away the sea-boat's crew—send the gunner's mate aft!"

The boat's crew, anticipating the boatswain's mate, came tumbling aft, their bare feet sounding like thunder on the deck.

"Mr. Maddox," said the captain to the master's mate, "take her bearing, and keep it on; we may find out how she's steering."

The master's mate went to the compass, which was lit by two little oil-lamps. It is not very easy to take the "bearing" by compass of a sound, but he stretched his hand in the direction of the thump of the oars, as he imagined, and looked down at the compass-card. As he did so, the sound seemed to shift—behind him? Where was it?

"She's under the stern now, sir," said the quartermaster, and Maddox shifted his ground. Then came a cry from forward.

"Boat's right ahead, sir!"

"How does she bear, Mr. Maddox?" asked the captain.

"I can't make out, sir; she's all round the compass——"

"The ship's slewing, you fool," said the captain, using some strong language to his subordinate.

"No, sir; her head's north-west—scarcely shifted in the last half-hour!"

Thump, thump—thump, thump, went the oars—now ahead, now on the port beam; and the men ran about the deck to listen, an increasing fear among them, which had the effect of stimulating their animosity towards the captain.

The men were in the boat at the davits, waiting for orders; the gunner's mate stood by the gun. Thump, thump—thump, thump—now here, now there—sometimes nearer, then more

remote. A strong conviction was growing that this was no ordinary boat, and a voice from forward brought matters to a climax.

"It's some poor beggars looking for Christmas Day!"

A loud laugh, jeering, dangerous, greeted this speech.

"Fire the gun!" said the captain; and never did a gun make such a hideous noise—the concussion seemed to shake the heavens, and echo from a thousand different points.

"Shall we lower the cutter, sir?" said Jack Rags, who was a matter-of-fact person, not taking much stock in "spooks."

The boat's crew suddenly came climbing in from the cutter, and clustered on deck.

"Man the boat!" said the first lieutenant. "Who told you to come inboard?"

"We're not going pulling after ghosts," said one man, loudly and mutinously, and others joined in, while the ship's company, clustered by this time about the mainmast, gave obvious signs of sympathy.

"Won't you?" said the captain furiously; "I'll have the first man shot who refuses! Send the sergeant of marines here!"

The sergeant advanced, respectful and imperturbable—ghosts or no ghosts, you can always reckon on the marines!

Suddenly, some one kicked the lantern from the coxswain's hand, and the boat's crew ran forward and joined the crowd about the mainmast—thump, thump—thump, thump, went the mysterious boat.

"Get your men under arms—beat to quarters! Where's the drummer?" cried the captain, in a towering rage, not unmixed with fear; the invisible boat was having its effect upon him.

The drummer, staunch to his duty, rattled away on his drum. Not a man moved, except the marines, who silently fell-in with fixed bayonets; and still the thumping of the oars went on.

It was a very awkward moment, and what might have happened next it is impossible to say; fortunately there was

a diversion, certainly not supernatural this time—it was nature herself, in fact, who provided it.

The topsails, which had all this time been flapping to and fro as the brig rolled, suddenly made quite a different noise—a sort of shiver ran through them; they filled, flapped again, as the vessel rolled to leeward, then filled more strongly, causing the brig to steady herself in the swell. Away to the north-east there was a lifting of the sky, a light, shallow arch showing under the blackness.

“Hard up with the helm!” roared the captain. “Weather mainbrace! Hands by the topsail halyards!”

And the men who had refused to go to their quarters flew to obey—they could hear the voice of the approaching squall; it sang through the upper spars and rigging, and finally burst upon them, with white water and drenching rain, in all its fury.

The jib-sheet parted with a loud report, and the sail blew away in ribbons. The brig was with difficulty kept off the wind; but in a few minutes a staysail was hoisted, the topsails lowered, and she was flying before it; then three reefs were taken in, and she was brought to the wind—already abating.

In the morning the trade-wind had reasserted itself. With every stitch of canvas on her, the *Dragonfly* was reeling off eleven knots—“the girls at home had got hold of the tow-rope.” Moreover, while the men were at breakfast, the word had been passed:

“Now, d’ye hear, there? It’s Christmas Day!”

An announcement which was greeted with much laughter.

The talk round the mess-tables was of the extraordinary occurrences of the previous night.

When the squall struck the ship, drowning once for all the mysterious thumping of the oars, a shrill, human cry had seemed to accompany it—a wild appeal, in a woman’s voice. Some said it cried a word, a name; to others it was simply a wail of unutterable terror, of the agony of death.

Those who were near the captain heard him cry out, saw him stagger, and clutch at a rope. He remained on deck

until all was safe ; then he called the first lieutenant, his voice trembling :

" Pass the word at breakfast that it's Christmas Day, and make no entry in the log——"

" I understand, sir," said the first lieutenant ; and the incident was officially wiped out.

When the *Dragonfly* anchored in Plymouth Sound, news was brought of a disaster off Holyhead, upon Christmas night. The Dublin steamer—a comparatively new institution at that time—had collided in a fog with a man-of-war, and sunk in a few minutes. The man-of-war's boats had pulled for hours over the ground, and saved a few of the crew and passengers ; but amongst the missing was Captain Wilson's young wife and her child. She had been summoned in haste to her father's death-bed in Dublin, only to meet her own death in the fog and darkness.

Toby Wilson was an altered man from that time onward ; and even Jack Rags was compelled to acknowledge that there was something uncanny about that ghost-boat.

THE LOSS OF THE "TRIBUNE" FRIGATE

IN the month of September, 1797, the *Tribune*, a 36-gun frigate, sailed from Torbay, with a convoy of merchant vessels under her care, bound for Quebec and Newfoundland.

She was a French-built ship, having been captured in June of the previous year and added to the British Navy, and was commanded at this time by Captain Scory Barker.

The voyage proved a stormy one, and during a gale in the month of October the frigate parted from her convoy, as so frequently happened in tempestuous weather. It was customary, under these circumstances, to have some pre-arranged locality to which all the ships should direct their course when the weather moderated, and so proceed in company once more; whether or not this was done in the present instance is not clear, but the *Tribune* eventually arrived, alone, off the entrance to Halifax Harbour, in Nova Scotia—a very fine harbour, and by no means difficult of access in clear weather. There are some scattered shoals, but they are easily avoided, with due attention to the directions on the chart. At that time, however, the charts were probably very incomplete, and it was customary, unless the sailing master knew the ground very well, to take a pilot outside. This was what Captain Barker, finding the ship very rapidly nearing the harbour with a strong breeze from east-south-east, proposed to do; but the master, Mr. James Clubb, declared that it was not necessary, as he knew the port, and had beat a 44-gun ship in against the wind—whereas the wind was then fair, and so the task was, comparatively, an easy one. Satisfied of the master's competence, Captain Barker con-

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sented, and went below to write some letters, leaving the ship in the master's hands.

This was on the 23rd of November, the harbour mouth having been made out about 8 a.m.*; and as the *Tribune* sailed on towards the harbour, she was easily seen, some ten or twelve miles distant, from the *Asia*, lying below the dockyard. Now, Mr. Clubb apparently was not quite as well acquainted with the ground as he represented himself to be; but he was interested in refusing a pilot, because, if he took the ship in himself, he was entitled to a certain sum of money—"pilotage allowance," as it was termed—whereas if the ship was in charge of a pilot, the latter would receive all the emoluments and the master nothing.

About six miles below the dockyard the approach is some two miles in width, having on the left the coastline and on the right a dangerous shoal, known as the Thrum Cap, at the south end of an island—MacNab Island—of considerable size. A mile and a half higher up, however, it narrows to about a quarter of a mile; but with a fair wind there was no difficulty about getting in. I am disposed to think that Mr. Clubb was drawing a little upon his imagination when he stated that he had beat a large frigate in—it would certainly be a ticklish job even for a thoroughly skilled pilot, which he presently demonstrated that he was not.

All went well, however, until about noon, when the ship was approaching the Thrum Cap shoal; and then the master appeared to be getting somewhat nervous, for he sent down an earnest message to his assistant, Mr. John Galvin, master's mate, who was said to know the harbour well, to

* The accounts given of the wreck in *James's Naval History* and later in Sir Wm. Laird Clowes *Royal Navy* give the 16th of November as the date; but the original letter from Captain Robert Murray, of the *Asia*, giving an account of the occurrence, puts it as the 23rd, and there does not appear to be any reason to question this official document. In telling a true story, I always think one should be as accurate as possible, so I prefer to call it the 23rd.

come on deck. Mr. Galvin, however, was on the sick-list, and did not see why he should go on deck in a cold wind; and it was not until he had received repeated messages from the master that he came up. The frigate was then running at a good speed for the harbour, and Galvin, as he came up the ladder, heard the leadsman call. "By the mark five!" Five fathoms! He knew in a moment that this was all wrong, as there should have been, certainly, eight or ten fathoms in the proper channel; so he jumped on deck, and, standing on one of the guns, took a hasty look round to see whether he could recognise the landmarks and place the ship. As he did so, he saw the master, in a sort of panic, run to the wheel and put the helm over—so as to "keep her away" from the wind, and take her over farther towards the western shore.

He was too late; in a minute or less the ship struck on the Thrum Cap shoal—and struck, we may be sure, with much violence, for she must have had a great deal of way on.

This was a rude interruption to Captain Barker's letter-writing. In a moment he was on deck, blaming himself, no doubt, for being so ready to listen to the master, and very angry also with that officer. "You have lost the ship, sir!" he exclaimed; "I told you to take a pilot!" Then he turned upon Galvin, and said, "I am surprised that you should be here and see the master run the ship aground, when you know the harbour so well!" Which, as we know, was rather hard on the master's mate.

But no amount of abuse or recrimination would float the ship. It was necessary to take some immediate steps to save her if possible, and the men were set to work to throw the guns overboard and lighten the ship in every possible way.

The wind had rapidly increased, and was blowing a gale from the south-east, which brought a swell up the harbour, causing the ship to bump heavily on the shoal; she had now run over a portion of it, and her stern was banging in

such a manner that the rudder was speedily smashed and huge breaches made in her bottom.

Still they laboured all the afternoon, striving to float her. It does not appear to have occurred to Captain Barker that she probably would not float very long if they succeeded. The people—some two hundred and forty, including some women and children—might certainly have been landed during daylight, but no attempt was made to effect this; the captain's one idea was to get the vessel afloat and sail her into harbour.

Some boats, in spite of the gale, managed to get down—one from the dockyard, with the boatswain on board; but they could be of little or no service, though they contrived to land a couple of passengers, military officers, later on.

Soon after eight o'clock, in pitch darkness, the lightened ship commenced to heave clear, and about nine she floated off, her bow swinging round so as to point towards the other shore. Rudderless, and with seven feet of water in the hold, it was impossible to steer her; but the head-sails were set, to point her bow up the harbour—all to no purpose: the wind was driving her over towards the western side, which is very rocky and steep. The starboard anchor was let go, but it would not hold her for a moment; she still drove on, the gale bringing her stern round the wrong way. The cable was hastily cut—in those days a sharp axe was all that was necessary—and the mizen-mast was cut away, in the hope that the head-sails might yet take her round—no use! The port anchor was let go, and fifty fathoms of cable paid out. Still she drove, and at length struck a reef close to the entrance of a small inlet named Herring Cove. If only she would have stuck hard and fast there! The crew might perhaps have been landed, in spite of the gale and the darkness; but she swung off again, and then it was evident that she could not float more than a few minutes. Full of water, she staggered and lurched; a man came running to Mr. Galvin, who was endeavouring to keep the pumps going, crying out that the

ship was sinking—too true! With one last, hopeless lurch, down she went, with all on board, in some sixty or seventy feet of water.

Then ensued an awful scene—many of the crew must have been drowned between decks, without a chance. Mr. Galvin was washed up from below through an open hatchway, and was taken down at first in the vortex caused by the sinking hull; on coming to the surface, he swam for the mainmast—for the masts were, of course, well above water—but was seized by three despairing, drowning men. He shook them off by diving, and eventually gained the maintop.

On the masts, crowding the rigging, and clinging to the yards and tops, were some hundred people. The shore was so near that they could actually talk to the little crowd which speedily assembled at the nearest point, by Herring Cove; but the wind had by this time increased to a heavy gale, and, from its direction, the whole weight of the sea swept in, unchecked, upon the rocky coast, breaking with tremendous violence, and it appeared impossible to render any assistance from the shore; nor would the strongest swimmer have had a moment's chance of surviving the passage from the ship. The life-saving rocket apparatus was then unknown.

They could only hold on and wish for daylight; but most of them found this too much for their powers. It was bitterly cold, the salt spray washed over them without cessation, their hands became numb and helpless, their senses dulled by exposure, and before long the greater number had succumbed and fallen into the raging sea.

About midnight the mainmast fell with some thirty or forty people on it. Only ten of these succeeded in regaining a hold of the maintop, which, broken away from the mast, rested upon the mainyard in a precarious position; one of these was Mr. Galvin, who was thus a second time almost miraculously relieved from death.

On the foretop, at this time, there were ten survivors; but when day at length broke upon the dismal scene only four

were alive in each top, and their position appeared, indeed, to be quite hopeless. Two seamen in the foretop, Richard Dunlap and Daniel Munroe, men of exceptional strength and courage, were apparently but little affected by the long hours of exposure. Indeed, it is related that Munroe, missing his shipmate for some two hours, concluded that he had been compelled to let go and had perished; but suddenly Dunlap reappeared, thrusting his head up through what is termed the "lubber's hole," where there is space left for the rigging, and, in reply to Munroe's inquiries, he said he had been "cruising for a better berth," and, after swimming about for some time, had got under the top in the futtock-shrouds and actually slept for more than an hour.

Daylight broadened, and still the little group of survivors looked in vain for succour—still the gale raged, and the great seas swept into the cove and thundered against the low cliffs. Would no one attempt a rescue?

About eleven o'clock a small boat appeared in the entrance to Herring Cove—a very small boat, a mere skiff, tossed like a cork upon the huge seas, but headed straight for the wreck. She was rowed by a lad—almost a child—of thirteen, no doubt a son of one of those hardy Nova Scotian fishermen, who almost daily risk their lives in their calling.

With consummate skill and strength beyond his years the boy pursued his self-imposed and heroic task. Slowly—very slowly, mounting crest after crest, disappearing in the hollow of the sea, only to emerge once more triumphant, the frail craft approached the foretop, and then, keeping just clear of the mast, the plucky young sculler hailed that he could take *two*—no more. There were four there—two hale and strong, able without difficulty to jump into the boat, the others weak, exhausted, benumbed, caring little whether they lived or died.

But Dunlap and Munroe did not hesitate for a moment. With splendid generosity they roused their despairing shipmates, and actually succeeded, by sheer strength and skill, in placing them in the boat, in which the intrepid fisherboy conveyed them safely to the cove. None of the accounts give

us the name of this youthful hero. Perhaps it is known to this day at Herring Cove; possibly his descendants still survive there, great-grandchildren, or what not—certainly he merits equal recognition with the two gallant seamen who refused to avail themselves of his assistance until their weaker comrades were safe. He made another attempt, but his desperate efforts had taken too much out of him, and he was beaten back into the cove.

However, his noble example was not without fruit. The *Tribune's* jolly-boat had contrived to land on the previous night; this, and some shore-boats, at length reached the wreck, and Mr. Galvin and five others were landed—eight survivors out of the whole crew.

Captain Robert Murray, of H.M.S. *Asia*, in the absence of the Admiral, reported the circumstances to the Admiralty, and in conclusion, he writes:

“I have been as particular as I could in the relation of this melancholy affair, as well for their Lordships' information as also to prevent if possible any improper comments on the conduct of Captain Barker, as many may be of opinion he ought to have quitted his ship with the people before dark. I trust their Lordships will agree with me, from this relation, and the enclosed printed statement of facts, which I have taken great pains to collect, that he has only fell a victim to his ardour and anxiety to perform his duty.”

Well, poor Barker, if he had been guilty of an error in judgment, had paid heavily for it, and his brother-officer's generous defence of his conduct is very natural.

No court-martial was held upon Mr. Galvin and the other survivors, but in June of the following year—more than six months subsequently—an inquiry took place by order of Vice-Admiral George Vandeput: a very brief inquiry, only Mr. Galvin and Dunlap being called upon to relate what they saw, and the verdict was, that the frigate was lost through the ignorance of the master, who, poor man! also paid for his blunder with his life.

THE BLOWING UP OF THE "THUNDERBOLT"

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

ONE dark September night, something over thirty years ago, there was a very disastrous collision in the Channel, not far from Portland. A stiff breeze was blowing from the south-west, and two large sailing ships, one built of wood and the other of iron, were crossing each other's course; the wooden vessel running up Channel, the other close-hauled to the wind, beating down Channel. How it happened no one understood very well, for the night, though cloudy and dark, was clear, and it was the duty of the vessel which was running to keep clear of the other, according to the well-known "Rule of the Road" at sea; but somebody on board of the former made a bad mistake, for she crashed stem on into the iron ship, smashing her side in, so that she sank, in a few minutes, with all hands.

The wooden vessel was, of course, sorely damaged, and immediately began to settle down by the bows; most of her crew managed to get into one of the boats, and arrived on the following day at Weymouth to report the catastrophe. Their ship, they said, had capsized, but whether or not she actually went down they could not tell.

The matter could not, however, be left in doubt, for a 1,400-ton ship floating about, bottom up, is not a desirable sort of thing in the highway of the English Channel. So the officials of Trinity House, which has all to do with lighthouses and the safety of channels, mentioned the business to the Admiralty, and a telegram was dispatched to the

admiral in command of the Channel Squadron, then lying at Portland, to send a ship out to seek for the wreck of the *Thunderbolt*; and, if found, to shatter it with explosives, or take any steps which might appear best to get rid of the danger to navigation.

The *Terrible*, an early ironclad, of moderate dimensions, and still more moderate speed, was immediately ordered to get up steam, her captain went on board the flagship to receive his orders, and in a very short time she was steaming round the end of the breakwater, a signalman with a large spy-glass being stationed at the foretopmast head to look out for the wreck.

The officers and men naturally welcomed this little job as an agreeable change from the ordinary squadron routine, which is apt to become decidedly wearisome; Stevens, the gunnery lieutenant—whom we have met with previously as a midshipman, under Bob Gilroy—was particularly elated, foreseeing some probable fun with explosives, for which his soul yearned. There was no torpedo lieutenant on board the *Terrible*, all this kind of business being under the gunnery lieutenant; and he immediately sent for the gunner, and discussed the resources of the ship in the matter of mines, etc., which might be utilised with advantage for the purpose in view.

He was not disappointed, for the signalman presently hailed, "Wreck on the starboard bow, sir!" and, when the ship's head was pointed in the right direction, descended from his perch to report more precisely the nature of his "find," which was not then visible from the deck. And a very queer find it was, when at length it came in view; nothing more than a black triangle, standing some twelve or fifteen feet out of the water.

To the seamen's eyes on board the man-of-war it was, however, sufficiently instructive. They realised immediately that the ill-fated *Thunderbolt* had capsized, with her bows already deeply immersed, and all the loose gear, above and below decks, tumbling forward, had depressed the bows still

more, so that she was now floating bottom up, with all her masts and rigging pointing downwards, and only a little bit of the after-part of the keel, with the stern-post and rudder, above water—a very curious position.

Obviously she was a very great danger to ships passing up or down Channel in the night. It would be impossible to see her in time to avoid collision, and, small as was the visible portion, there was the weight of the whole solid hull to run against—enough to sink any moderate-sized vessel.

"Send for Mr. Stevens," said the captain, "and call away the sea-boat's crew."

The weather was delightfully fine, the sea smooth, save for a slight swell. The ship was stopped close to the wreck; no one on board had ever seen the like before. There was the vessel's "heel," the dingy copper and black-painted wood, speckled with barnacles, alone visible. Below there was the huge hull, the tall masts with sails still set—courses, and a reef in the upper topsails, as the crew had reported—and all the tangle of standing and running rigging upside down.

The boat was lowered for a more minute inspection, Stevens accompanying the captain and commander; but there was little further knowledge to be gained by it.

"We can't tow her in," said the captain, "with all that top-hamper on end, that's certain. Do you think we can blow her up, Mr. Stevens?"

"Oh yes, sir!" said Stevens, with all the confidence of youth. "It will take a good deal of powder to do it, but we can use the gun-cotton out of the Whitehead torpedo-heads as well."

"Don't you think, sir," said the commander, "that she may possibly be kept in this queer position by the air being forced up into the after-part and compressed there?"

"H'm!" said the captain doubtfully. "I suppose it's possible. You think we might bore a hole and let it out? And what do you think would happen then?"

"Oh! I won't venture to prophesy, sir," said the commander, laughing.

"We can easily bore a hole with an eight-inch shell, sir," said Stevens.

"So we can—well, give way on board, and we'll try it."

A gun was quickly loaded with "common shell," and Stevens, all "on the go" with the realisation of his own importance, took the place of the captain of the gun. The shell contained a charge of powder, and in its muzzle was screwed a percussion fuse, which would ignite the charge on striking any solid object. The ship had drifted by this time some three or four hundred yards from the wreck, but Stevens was a crack shot with a big gun, and judged the distance to a nicety.

Holding the trigger-lanyard and squinting along the sights he selected the happy moment when the slight roll of the ship brought his aim on, and pulled sharply.

A little black object sped straight for the centre of the triangle. The report of the gun was followed by a sharp explosion, and a cloud of smoke, mixed with huge splinters of wood, rose from the wreck. A gaping breach was clearly visible, the timbers all rent and shivered.

"Well, that's let the air out, at any rate," said the captain. "A deuced good shot, too! Who fired that shot?"

After a slight pause, the reply was passed up from below :

"The gunnery loo-tenant, sir."

"Very pretty shot, Mr. Stevens," said the captain, as that officer appeared on deck; "but I don't think we shall gain anything by repeating it—we must tackle her below water. Would it be safe to send the diver down, do you think?"

The commander shook his head.

"Shouldn't like to try it, sir. There must be a lot of loose raffle hanging about below, and he'd be almost sure to get his air-pipe foul of something—there's a bit of a swell, too."

"Very true; we mustn't risk life over it."

"Shall I send a Whitehead at her, ten feet down, sir?" asked Stevens.

The *Terrible* had recently been fitted with the means of

discharging a Whitehead torpedo on either side, and Stevens was eager to play with this new toy.

"Well—you may try it," said the captain; "I doubt whether it will do much good."

Stevens dived down to the lower regions, and a Whitehead was placed with all dispatch in the tube, which was above water.

After some necessary delay, the long, fish-like machine, ejected by means of compressed air, leaped from the ship's side and dived, its progress marked by copious air-bubbles as its own engines propelled it straight for the wreck.

Suddenly the triangle lurched and quivered, a great column of water was hove up to one side of it, and immediately pieces of timber came floating up, and a yard-arm appeared above the surface, the clew of a sail attached to it.

"That shook her up," said the captain; "but we shall never sink her—we must try some big mines, lower down, and break her up."

Now, it is very easy to talk about breaking up a 1,400-ton ship—breaking her up, that is to say, to such an extent that no portion shall remain heavy enough to endanger any vessel through collision with it—but it is quite another matter to do it; and so our friend Lieutenant Stevens was destined to discover. He was the only man on board who possessed the knowledge requisite for preparing mines, to be fired electrically; there were two "trained torpedo-men," petty officers, on his staff, and a crew for the Whitehead torpedo, specially instructed in its management, but the actual preparation of the mines was bound to be performed under Stevens's personal supervision.

And how did he prepare them? Well, he had a dozen, or rather, after his experimental shot, eleven Whitehead torpedo charges, each consisting of 70 lb. of compressed gun-cotton which is largely impregnated with water, and cannot be exploded save by the firing of a small charge of dry gun-cotton, with a special "detonator"—a small quantity of a very powerful explosive.

Three empty salt-beef casks were got up from below, and some Whitehead charges were broken up and stuffed into them, the services of the cooper, an Irishman, being requisitioned to start the hoops and take out the heads of the casks. When the cask was about half-full, Stevens put in the dry charge and detonator, with the wires attached, these being brought out through the bung of the cask, the holes made water-tight. The cask being then filled up, the dry charge was embedded in the centre, and nothing save a discharge of electricity through the fuse could possibly explode it.

"That's enough. Now, cooper, head up the cask."

The Irishman viewed it doubtfully, his hammer in one hand and "driver" in the other.

"And where'll I be, sor, in case it goes off, at all?"

"We shall all be together, in kingdom come," said Stevens, laughing; "but you needn't be afraid—I would give you a dozen boxes of matches to try with, and you wouldn't set that off."

"Sorra a one of me would be thrying it," said the cooper earnestly; but he set to work and headed up the three casks.

Meanwhile, more casks were being brought up, and the gunner was getting out a number of 15-lb. bags of what was then known officially as "large grain powder"—I suppose because it was very much finer in grain than the bulk of the powder in the magazine, which was used in the big guns. The "service" names of sundry stores on shipboard are fearful and wonderful, and the puzzle is usually improved upon by putting them the wrong way round, with the cart before the horse. However, the gunner knew all about these things, and sufficient powder was speedily forthcoming to fill three more casks.

A salt-beef cask of those days was about the size of a 36-gallon beer cask, very strong, and quite water-tight; and it would hold just 300 lb. of powder—a formidable charge.

Meanwhile, the steam pinnace had been hoisted out, and

the boiler and engines placed in her—no easy task, with even a slight swell on, for the boiler had four "lugs," with holes in them, which had to be placed over corresponding fixed pins in the floor of the boat; and I will leave you to imagine how the boat dodged the boiler, repeatedly causing it to be landed anywhere except over the pins, while the commander reproached the crew for not having the boiler just right when the tackle was let go, and the crew apostrophised the boat for her antics, and the commander—under their breath—for "letting go" at the wrong moment. They got it done at last, and steam was speedily raised; and there was the solid triangular piece of wreck awaiting their attentions, slowly rising and falling on the low swell, with the great gaping rent made by the explosion of the shell.

Stevens was handling yards and yards of india-rubber-covered wire, assisted by his torpedo men, who coiled it down neatly in the pinnace, which was now blowing off steam, with the three casks of gun-cotton slung along one side, connected by a strong rope, the long ends of harmless-looking wire hanging loose from the bung-holes—harmless, until it becomes a channel for the passage of that mysterious and invisible force which is known as electricity.

Stevens connected the three casks together by means of their wires, and to each of the two loose ends remaining he attached one of his long wires, thus making a clear road for the electric current through the three casks in succession and the two long wires, the other ends of which were carefully held by a torpedo man—this is termed, electrically, "joining up in series," but I cannot stop now to tell you why. A neat mahogany box, containing the battery, was passed into the boat, a carpenter's mate followed, armed with a huge hammer and a big, sharp-pointed iron bolt, and they shoved off.

Stevens was left a perfectly free hand, for there was no one capable of dictating to him, and there is no doubt that he was thoroughly enjoying himself. The tide was making up Channel, and they went alongside the wreck so that the

current bound the boat to it. The carpenter drove in his spike as far as possible from the stern-post of the ship, and the three casks, slung close together, and weighted with shot, were attached to it, and carefully lowered about thirty feet, the tide, of course, swinging them closely against the submerged hull of the vessel.

"Keep the wires clear—shove off," said Stevens; "easy ahead."

The boat steamed slowly away, the men paying out the wires, which Stevens now attached to the battery.

"Stop her," said Stevens, when at a safe distance; and every one watched the wreck in silence.

Stevens pressed the key.

Instantly there was a dull, heavy blow on the boat's bottom, the concussion communicated by the water. The wreck heaved, a great dome of water rose alongside it; a moment later, like some monster in its death agony, it turned over slowly from them, and remained at a sharp angle. Huge pieces of timber floated up, and immediately afterwards great spars made their appearance—yards, with the sails attached and spread, and an enormous piece, all tangled with ropes and gear, slowly emerged, end on, held down partially by the rigging.

"Shaken the mizen-mast out of her!" exclaimed Stevens gleefully; "haul in the wires!"

This was really a very successful attack, as the wreck had evidently changed its position, and lay at an angle which brought the masts nearer the surface and the hull in a better position for further operations; but the *Thunderbolt* was very far from being broken up yet.

Meanwhile, the gunner, with more zeal than discretion, had set about filling the other casks with powder. He was not a trained torpedo-man, and, having witnessed the operation of filling the casks with gun-cotton, he proceeded to get in his powder in like manner, making the cooper unhead a cask, and joyfully pouring in bag after bag of powder.

Now, what is quite safe with damp gun-cotton, is by no

means so with powder, which should be poured in, by means of a large funnel, through the bung-hole.

Stevens, elated with success, and complimented by the captain, ran down to the forepart of the main deck in time to find the cooper in the act of driving home the iron hoops of the cask with an iron-shod tool, while grains of loose powder were squeezed out of the yet unclosed chinks! Why he had not already blown the forepart of *H.M.S. Terrible* to smithereens, and himself and the bystanders into eternity, must ever remain a mystery! I suppose that "sweet little cherub who sits up aloft to watch over the life of poor Jack" must extend his beneficent protection to Irish coopers, and so he kept the grains of powder from coming in contact with the iron "driver"—*one* would have been sufficient.

When Stevens realised what was going on, his heart came up into his throat.

"Stop!" he shouted, and, bounding forward, he administered a vigorous shove, which sent the astonished cooper staggering backwards over the chain cable; and then he delivered himself of a piece of his mind, of a quality which considerably astonished Mr. Dispart, the gunner, for Stevens was habitually a quiet and reticent officer, couching reproofs, when necessary, in moderate language; but there are occasions upon which the most self-contained individual must "let himself go"—and he did.

The perilous operation was nearly completed, so, rather than handle all the loose powder over again, Stevens made the carpenter produce a heavy wooden mallet and a wedge-shaped piece of very hard wood. Carefully brushing away the few loose grains remaining, he bade the cooper complete his task with these improvised tools.

"Is it me, sor?"

"Yes, of course—who else? It's all right now; drive that hoop close."

"Be the Holy Moses, it's just fit for waking I'll be before I'm done wi' this!"

"Don't fret about that," said Stevens grimly. "There'll

be nothing of you to wake when three hundred pounds of powder have done with you; but it's quite safe with those tools—and I'll take care there's no more of that tomfoolery."

The cooper thereupon resumed his task, but he sprang away from the cask after every blow, as though he could thus escape, and cut such a comical figure of funk that Stevens was forced to laugh, even while he abused him for his slowness.

"We must not risk life over it," the captain had said. Well, Stevens did not report the episode of the cask, but it impressed him with a strong sense of his own responsibility as the only real expert in the business; nevertheless, there was worse to come, in spite of all precautions.

All that day they worked at the wreck, using up all their gun-cotton and a huge amount of powder, and before dark the vessel was evidently much shattered below, and her masts more or less broken off, so the captain resolved to take her in tow, and, if possible, get her into Portland.

Two steel hawsers were accordingly attached, and the *Terrible*, under full steam, was just able to move the cumbrous mass, so they were very little nearer Portland at daybreak.

Stevens was up at four o'clock preparing another series of casks for a final explosion. He fired these from the ship, and so successfully had he placed them, that a huge piece of the forepart, with the stout bowsprit attached, was actually separated, and floated astern. The towing became much more easy, but the loose portion of the wreck was too heavy to be left floating about, and, as the weather continued fine and calm, Stevens was detached in the steam pinnace to smash it up.

He took with him four iron torpedo-cases, each containing 100 lb. of powder. These were supplied for use with a torpedo-pole, in the steam pinnace, the case being secured to the end of the long pole, which was depressed until the charge was some ten feet under water. The pinnace was then supposed to creep up to the enemy's ship, and, when the pole bumped against her, press the trigger and fire the charge—a very dangerous process, no longer in use.

These powder cases were made of very strong steel, and exploded with tremendous force, as gunpowder develops extra power from confinement. They were very well adapted for the object in view, and Stevens anticipated some good fun over the business.

At the last moment, the captain, presumably deeming it wiser to have another more responsible officer in the boat, called the sublieutenant out of her, and ordered another lieutenant, by name Flamstead, to accompany Stevens.

Now, these two officers were just then upon more than distant terms. The precise cause of their mutual animosity need not be here entered upon in detail, but I believe that Stevens had detected the other in some discreditable business on shore, and was holding over him unpleasant consequences unless he made amends in a certain quarter. There was, in fact, a lady in the case, in whom Stevens was deeply interested, so the bitterness of feeling may be readily imagined.

Flamstead's presence was, of course, extremely distasteful under the circumstances, but Stevens was the senior, which made it the easier for him, and they did not, of course, display their feelings before the men.

The floating wreck was quickly reached, and they steamed slowly round it, looking for a likely spot to apply a mine. The task was not a very easy one, for it was obviously not of very much use to hang their charge against the side of the wreck—they wanted to get under it, if possible. At length they hung a loaded case from the stump of the bowsprit, as close in as possible, and, steaming off slowly, fired it as the wires drew out astern; but the result was disappointing—some big splinters were flung about, and the bowsprit was broken off short. The main piece remained, however, much the same as before, a decided danger to small craft.

Twice again they tried, with more or less result, then sat down to have their dinner, or lunch, about twelve o'clock, only one case remaining.

Stevens kept his eyes upon the wreck while he ate his sandwiches. The sun was warm, the sea as calm as a mill-

pond. In the distance was their ship, with her tall spars, slowly dragging the heavy sunken mass towards Portland.

How was he to complete his task? How utilise this one charge to advantage? The idea of returning unsuccessful was extremely repugnant to him, and none the less so by reason of Flamstead's presence, for he was well aware that his failure would be a source of gratification to his companion.

As the boat drifted slowly, he thought he detected a spot where they could hang their charge immediately under the bulk of the wreck.

"Finished dinner?" he asked. "Well, I want to hang this case down through that hole there. Can one of you jump on the wreck and pass a rope's end through it?"

Two or three men were up in a moment—a bluejacket always says he can do a thing at once. The pinnace was brought alongside, and the coxswain and another man scrambled on to the black, rusty hull; Stevens followed, determined that his scheme should not fail for lack of personal supervision. Peering down through a ragged rent in the timbers, he saw how his end could be attained. A rope from the pinnace was brought through the hole, over a stout beam, and the other end attached to the mine, a second rope being secured to it in the boat.

"Now, keep the wires clear, and ease away as we haul," said Stevens; and the iron case was presently suspended, about twelve feet down, immediately under the wreck, the beam serving to keep it in precise position.

"That'll settle her," said Stevens, as he got into the boat.

"She'll fly, sir," said the gunner's mate.

"Hope so," said Stevens, not understanding him precisely at the moment—"oh yes; we must go full speed ahead directly I fire. Shove off."

The boat parted slowly from the wreck, gradually paying out the wires.

"Only a fathom or two of slack, sir," said the gunner's mate, holding the wires,

"Give her a small turn astern," said Stevens, seeing that the tide was swinging the boat into a more favourable position. "Stop her!"

He had his hand on the battery: every eye in the boat was on the wreck, for when there is going to be a big blow-up, every one of course wants to see it. The stoker in charge of the engines was no exception, keeping his hand upon the steam-valve; but he quite forgot that he had omitted to put the gear of the engine "ahead."

Stevens pressed the trigger, and the result was even more decisive than he had expected. An explosive thus placed, with all the depth of the sea resisting its expansion downwards, exerts all its force upon whatever happens to be above it; and in this instance it was not required to throw up merely a column of water—the most solid part of the wreck was over it, and the effect was tremendous.

Instantly, with a rending and crashing noise, huge pieces of timber were hurled aloft to an immense height, whirling round and round in the air; the wreck was split asunder and completely disintegrated.

"Full speed ahead!" shouted Stevens, as the explosion came.

The stoker instantly opened the valve—and the boat commenced to go *astern*!

"Ahead, you fool!" yelled Stevens; the man had already discovered his error, and reversed the gear—but the delay made all the difference.

Before the boat could gather headway, the flying fragments were splashing all round her; she was going ahead—she might go clear.

No—a huge chunk of wood, half as long as the boat, descended upon her; they saw it coming, and there was a general struggle to avoid it—but all could not hope to escape.

Crash! came the mighty missile, partly end on, just abaft the boiler, knocking a huge piece clean out of the boat's bottom, and, tilting as it smashed through, caught Flamstead

with its jagged, splintered end, gashing his forehead, and knocking him senseless; then, in a moment, the pinnacle, with the heavy boiler and fittings, went down like a stone.

Two men had avoided the peril by promptly jumping overboard; now they were all left swimming about—except Flamstead. There was some blood on the surface, and Stevens, without a moment's hesitation, threw up his heels and dived for him. The gunner's mate was almost as quick, and, as luck would have it, they found him at once, and brought him up, each holding his clothing. His head lolled helplessly, his face covered with blood; they supported him to the largest remaining portion of the wreck, and managed to drag him on to it, in a precarious position, for it displayed an inconvenient tendency to turn over.

The remainder, one or two of them very poor swimmers, found refuge on large planks, etc., and eventually reached more solid support; and then they had time to look about them.

Stevens at once realised that he had most successfully accomplished his purpose; there was no piece of the *Thunderbolt* remaining which could be regarded as a danger to any vessel. But the price was a heavy one: the pinnacle gone, and the unfortunate lieutenant, perhaps, killed. He looked ghastly enough as they held him; but he was alive, and they did their best to staunch the wound with their own soaking handkerchiefs.

There was nothing near them—only the smoke of one or two steamers in the distance. The Bill of Portland, and the coast-line stretching away to St. Alban's Head, were clear and distinct, but a long way off.

For hours they waited, fearing that darkness would still find them there; but about five o'clock a sailing craft, a sloop, bound for Poole, bore down and picked them up. The skipper readily agreed to carry them into Portland; but the breeze was light, and it was long after dark before they rounded the breakwater, meeting the flagship's steam launch on the way to look for them. The *Terrible* was just struggling into

the anchorage with her troublesome "tow," and the captain, after dark, had signalled to the flagship his apprehension about the safety of the pinnacle.

Stevens, inquiring of the doctor about his messmate next morning, was told that he was on the mend, though the terrible wound had to be stitched up, and would leave a scar for life.

Later on, Flamstead's marine servant brought a message that his master would like to see Lieutenant Stevens, who immediately complied with the summons, his rancour very greatly mollified, as it must always be in a generous nature, by his messmate's misfortune, and the agreeable recollection of his own brave and kindly action.

"Well, old chap," he said, "I'm glad to hear that you're going to get all right."

"Thanks to you."

"And Jenkins," said Stevens.

"You dived first. I have heard all about it, so it's no use trying to bounce," said the sick man, smiling at him from under the bandages; then he held out his hand, and no more words were necessary.

So the blowing up of the *Thunderbolt* had one good result, at least, besides clearing the Channel of a dangerous obstruction; and the admiral, hearing the story from Stevens's own lips, was very far from being hard upon him about the loss of the boat.

"You did your best," he said, "and I think you did very well, and that's what I shall report to the Admiralty."

A PLUCKY LITTLE PRIVATEER *

ON the 8th of November, 1810, when we were lying in that splendid harbour, the Cove of Cork, and quietly refitting our ship, an order came for us to proceed to sea instantly, on a cruise of a week off Cape Clear, in quest of an enemy's vessel, reported to have been seen from some of the signal towers on the west coast. We were in such a predicament that it was impossible to start before the next morning, though we worked all night. Off we went at last, but it was not until the 11th that we reached our appointed station. Towards evening it fell dead calm, at which time there were two strange sails in sight: one of them a ship, which we "calculated" was an American, from the whiteness of his sails, the other a very suspicious, roguish-looking brig; but as both of them were hull down, much of this was mere guess-work.

As the night fell, a light breeze sprang up, and we made all sail in the direction of the brig, though she was no longer visible. In the course of the middle watch we fortunately got sight of her with our night-glasses, and by two in the morning were near enough to give her a shot. The brig was then standing on a wind, while we were coming down upon her, right before it, or nearly so. The sound of our bow-chaser could scarcely have reached the vessel it was fired at before her helm was up, and the next instant her booms were rigged out and her studding-sails, aloft and aloft, seen dangling at the yardarms. The most crack ship in His Majesty's service,

* From "Fragments of Voyages" by Captain Basil Hall: the frigate was the *Endymion*.

with everything prepared, could hardly have made sail more smartly.

For our parts, we could set nothing more, having already spread every stitch of canvas; but the yards were trimmed afresh, the tacks hauled closer out, and the halyards sweated up till the yards actually pressed against the sheave-holes.* The best helmsman on board was placed at the wheel, and the foot of the foresail being drawn up slightly by the bunt slab-line, he could just see the chase clear of the foremast, and so keep her very nearly right ahead. The two forecastle guns, long 9-pounders, were now brought to bear on the brig; but as we made quite sure of catching her, and did not wish needlessly to injure our prize, or hurt her people, orders were given to fire at the sails, which, expanded as they now were before us, like the tail of a peacock in his fullest pride, offered a mark which could not well be missed. Nevertheless, the little fellow would not heave-to, for all we could do with our forecastle guns. At four o'clock, therefore, we managed to get one of the long 18-pounders on the maindeck to bear upon him from the bridge port. Still we could not stop him, though it was now bright moonlight, and there was no longer any tenderness about hurting his people, or injuring his hull. The vessel, however, at which we were peppering away with round and grape-shot as hard as we could discharge them from three good smart guns, was so low in the water that she offered, when seen end on, scarcely any mark. How it happened that none of her yards or masts came rattling down, and that none of her sails flew away under the influence of our fire, was quite inexplicable.

The water still continued quite smooth, though the wind had freshened, till we went along at the rate of six or seven knots. When the privateer got the wind, which we had brought up with us, she almost held her own, and it became

* The topsails and other square sails were hoisted by means of a stout rope, which passed over a pulley, or "sheave," in the thickness of the mast, a "purchase," or double tackle, being used to "sweat them up."
—Ed.

evident that she was one of that light and airy description of vessels which have generally an advantage over larger ships when there is but little wind. We therefore observed, with much anxiety, that about half-past four the breeze began gradually to die away, after which the chase gained rather than lost distance. Of course the guns were now plied with double care ; our best marksmen were straining their eyes and exerting their utmost skill, confident of hitting her, but all apparently to no purpose. One or two of the officers, in particular, who piqued themselves on knowing how to level a gun on principles quite unerring, in vain tried their infallible rules to bring our persevering chase to acknowledge himself caught.

By this time, of course, every man and boy in the ship was on deck, whether it was his watch or not ; even the marine officer, the purser, and the doctor left their beds—a rare phenomenon. Every one was giving his opinion to his neighbour : some said the shot went over her, some that they fell short ; and the opinion that she was a witch, or the Flying Dutchman, or some other phantom, was current among the sailors ; whilst the marines were clicking their flints, and preparing to give our little gentleman a taste of the small-arms when within their reach.

While things were in this anxious but very pleasurable state, our foresail flapped slowly against the mast, a sure indication that the breeze was lulling. The quadruple rows of reef-points were next heard to rattle along the topsails, sounds too well known to every ear as symptoms of an approaching calm. The studding-sails were still full, and so were the royals ; but by and by even their light canvas refused to belly out, so faint was the air which still carried us, but very gently, along the water, on the surface of which not a ripple was now to be seen in any direction. As the ship, however, still answered her helm, we kept the guns to bear on the chase without intermission, and with this degree of effect, that all her sails, aloft and aloft, were soon completely riddled, and some of them were seen hanging in such absolute rags that the slightest puff

of wind must have blown them away like so many cobwebs. By five o'clock it was almost entirely calm, and we had the mortification to observe that the chase, whose perseverance had kept him thus long out of our clutches, was putting in practice a manœuvre we could not imitate. He thrust out his sweeps, as they are called—huge oars requiring five or six men to each. These, when properly handled by a sufficiently numerous crew, in a small light vessel, give her the heels of a large ship when so nearly calm as it now was with us. We were not going more than a knot through the water, if so much, which was barely enough to give us steerage way.

The Frenchman got out, I suppose, about fifteen or twenty of these sweeps, and so vigorously were they applied, that we could see by the moonlight, and still more distinctly when the dawn appeared, that the foam was made to fly in sheets at each stroke of these gigantic oars, which were worked together by their looms being united by a hawser stretching fore and aft. Our chief anxiety now was to pitch a shot amongst his sweeps, as one successful hit there would have sent half his crew spinning about the decks. But we were not so fortunate, and in less than an hour he was out of shot, walking off from us in a style which it was impossible not to admire, though our disappointment and vexation were excessive. By midday he was at least ten miles ahead of us, and at two o'clock we could just see his upper sails above the horizon. We had observed, during the morning, that our indefatigable little chase, as soon as he had rowed himself from under the relentless fire of our guns, was busily employed in bending a new suit of sails, fishing his splintered yards, shifting his topgallant-masts, and rigging out fresh studding-sail booms—all wounded, more or less, by our shot. As the severe labour of the sweeps was never intermitted, we knew to a certainty that the chase, though small, must be full of hands, and consequently it was an object of great importance for us to catch him. Of this, however, there now seemed but very little chance, and many were the hearty maledictions he received, though shared, it is true, by our crack marksmen, now quite crestfallen, or driven

to the poor excuse of declaring that the moonlight on the water had deceived them as to the distance.

It really seemed as if every one on board had been seized with a fever; nothing else was thought of but the French brig; every glass, great and small, was in requisition, from the pocket spy-glass of the youngest midshipman to the forty-inch focus of the captain. Each telescope in its turn was hoisted to the cross-trees, and pointed with a sort of sickening eagerness towards the lessening speck on the distant horizon. One might also have thought that the ship was planted in a grove of trees in the height of spring-time, so numerous were the whistlers. This practice of whistling for a wind is one of our nautical superstitions which, however groundless and absurd, fastens insensibly on the strongest-minded sailors at such times. Indeed, I have seen many an officer's mouth take the piping form, and have even heard some sounds escape from lips which would have vehemently disclaimed all belief in the efficacy of such incantation.

In the course of the afternoon we perceived from the mast-head, far astern, a dark line along the horizon, which some of our most experienced hands pronounced the first trace of a breeze coming up. In the course of half an hour this line had widened so much that it could easily be perceived from the deck. Upon seeing this, the whistlers redoubled their efforts; and whether, as they pretended, it was owing to their interest with the clerk of the weather office, or whether the wind, if left alone, would have come just as soon, I do not venture to pronounce, but certain it is that, long before sunset, our hearts were rejoiced by the sight of those numerous flying patches of wind, scattered over the calm surface of the sea, and called by seamen "cat's-paws"—I presume, from the stealthy, timorous manner in which they seem to touch the water and straightway vanish again. By and by the true wind, the ripple from which had marked the horizon astern of us, and broken the face of the mirror shining brightly everywhere else, indicated its approach by fanning out the skysails and other flying kites—generally supposed to be superfluous,

but which, upon occasions such as this, do good service by catching the first breath of air, that seems always to float far above the water. One by one the sails were filled, and as the ship gathered way, every person marked the glistening eye of the helmsman when he felt the spokes of the wheel pressing against his hands by the action of the water on the rudder. The fire-engine had been carried into the tops, and where its long spouts could not reach, buckets of water were drawn up and thrown on the sails, so that every pore was filled and the full effect of the wind was exerted on the canvas.

The ship now began to speak, as it is termed, and on looking over the gangway we could see a line of small hissing bubbles, not yet deserving the name of spray, but quite enough to prove to us that the breeze was beginning to tell. It was near the middle of November, but the day was as hot as if it had been summer, and the wind, now freshening every second, blew coolly and gratefully upon us, giving assurance that we should have no more calms to trouble us, whatever might be our other difficulties in catching Monsieur Frenchman.

Of these difficulties, the greatest by far was that of keeping sight of the brig after it became dark. We overhauled him, however, so fast, that we had great hopes of getting near enough to be able to command him with the night-glasses, in which case we made pretty sure of our prize.

Meanwhile, as we spanked along, rapidly accelerating our pace, and rejoicing in the cracking of the ropes and the bending of the lightest and loftiest spars, that butterfly sort of gear which a very little wind soon brushes away, we had the malicious satisfaction of observing that the poor little privateer had not yet got a mouthful of the charming wind, which, like the well-known intoxicating gas, was by this time setting us all a-skippping about the decks. The greater part of the visible ocean was now under the influence of the new-born breeze; but in the spot where the brig lay, there occurred a belt or splash of clear white light, within which the calm still lingered, with the privateer sparkling in its

centre. Just as the sun went down, however, this spot was likewise melted into the rest, and the brig, like a poor hare roused from her seat, sprang off again. We were soon near enough to see her sweeps rigged in, to the delight, no doubt, of her weary crew, whose apprehensions of an English prison had probably kept up their strength to a pitch rarely equalled.

As the twilight, the bright twilight of winter, galloped away, a hundred pairs of eyes were almost jumping out of their sockets in their attempts to pierce the night ; while those who had glasses kept scrubbing them without mercy, as if they imagined more light would be let into the tube the more they injured the lenses. One person, and one only, continued, as he asserted, to see the chase, faintly strung, like a bead, on the horizon. I need not say that this sharp-sighted gentleman was nailed to his post, and ordered on no account to move his head, fatigue or no fatigue. There happened to be a single star, directly over the spot to which this fortunate youth was directing his view, with as much anxiety as ever Galileo peered into the heavens in search of a new planet. This fact being announced, a dozen spy-glasses were seen wagging up and down between this directing star and that part of the horizon, now almost invisible, which lay immediately below it. Many were the doubts expressed of the correctness of the first observation, and many the tormenting questions put to the observer, as to which way the brig was standing? what sail she had set? whether we were drawing up with her or not? as if the poor youngster had been placed alongside the vessel. These doubts and fears were put an end to, or nearly so, by bidding the boy keep his eye fixed on what he took to be the chase, and then, unknown to him, altering the ship's course for half a minute. This experiment had scarcely been commenced, before he cried out, "I have lost sight of her this very moment! I saw her but an instant ago!" And when the ship's head was brought back to the original course, he exclaimed, "There she is again, by jingo!—just to the right of the star!"

The star served another useful purpose at the same time. The man at the wheel could see it shining between the leech of the foretopsail and that of the topmast studding-sail, and was thus enabled to steer the ship with much greater steadiness than he could possibly have done by the compass alone. Before midnight, as the breeze had freshened greatly, and we were going at the rate of nine knots an hour, we had drawn up so much with the privateer that every one could see her with the naked eye; and the gunner with his mates, and the marksmen who had lost their credit on the preceding night, were fidgeting and fussing about the guns, eager to be banging away again at the prize, as they now began, rather prematurely, to call her, little knowing what a dexterous, persevering, and gallant little fellow they had to deal with, and how much trouble he was yet to give us.

It was not till about two o'clock that we once more came within good shot of him; and as it had been alleged that the guns had been fired too quickly the night before, the utmost attention was now paid to laying them properly, and the lanyard of the trigger never pulled till the person looking along the gun felt confident of his aim. The brig, however, appeared to possess the same witch-like, invulnerable quality as ever; for we could neither strike her hull, so as to force her to cry peccavi, nor bring down a yard, nor lop off a mast or a boom. It was really a curious spectacle to see a little bit of a thing skimming away before the wind, with such a huge monster as the *Endymion* tearing and plunging after her, like a voracious dolphin leaping from sea to sea in pursuit of a flying-fish.

In time this must have ended in the destruction of the brig; for as we gained upon her rapidly, some of our shot must by and by have taken effect, and sent her to the bottom. She was destined, however, to enjoy a little longer existence. The proper plan, perhaps, would have been to stand on, firing at her sails, till we had reached within musket shot, and then to have knocked down the helmsman and every one else on her deck. This, however,

was not our captain's plan, or probably he became impatient ; at all events, he gave orders for the whole starboard broadside to be got ready, and then, giving the ship a yaw, poured the whole discharge, as he thought, right into his wretched victim !

Not a mortal on board the frigate expected ever to look on the poor brig again. What, then, was our surprise, when the smoke blew swiftly past, to see the intrepid little cocky gliding away more merrily than before. As far as good discipline would allow, there was a general murmur of applause at the Frenchman's gallantry. In the next instant, however, this sound was converted into hearty laughter over the frigate's decks, when, in answer to our thundering broadside, a single small gun, a six-pounder, was fired from the brig's stern, as if in contempt of his formidable antagonist's prowess.

Instead of gaining by our manœuvre, we had lost a good deal, and in two ways. In the first place, by yawing out of our course, we enabled the privateer to gain several hundred yards upon us ; and secondly, his funny little shot, which had excited so much mirth, passed through the lee foretopsail yard-arm about six feet inside the boom-iron. Had it struck on the weather side, where the yard was cracking and straining at a most furious rate, the greater part of the sails on the foremast might have been taken in quicker than we could have wished, for we were now going at the rate of eleven and a half, with the wind on the quarter.

Just as we made out where his first shot had struck us, another cut through the weather maintopgallant-sheet ; and so he went on, firing away briskly, till most of our lofty sails were fluttering with the holes made in them. His own sails, I need scarcely add, were by this time so completely torn up by our shot, that we could see the sky through them all ; but still he refused to heave-to, and, by constantly firing his single stern-chaser, was evidently resolved to lose no possible chance of escape. Had one or two of his shot struck either of our topmasts, I really believe he might have got off. It therefore became absolutely necessary that we should either demolish

or capture him without further loss of time. The choice was left to himself, as will be seen. But such a spirited cruiser as this was an enemy worth subduing at any cost ; for there was no calculating the mischief a privateer so admirably commanded might have wrought in a convoy. There was a degree of discretion, also, about this expert privateersman which was very remarkable, and deserving of such favour at our hands as we had to spare. He took care to direct his stern-chaser so high that there was little chance of his shot striking any of our people. Indeed, he evidently aimed only at crippling the masts, knowing right well that it would answer none of his ends to kill or wound any number of his enemy's crew, while it might irritate their captain to show him less mercy at the last moment, which, as will be seen, was fast approaching.

The breeze had now freshened to nearly a gale of wind, and when the log was hove, out of curiosity, just after the broadside I have described, we were going nearly twelve knots (or between thirteen and fourteen miles an hour), foaming and splashing along. The distance between us and the brig was now rapidly decreasing, for most of his sails were in shreds, and we determined to bring him, as we said, to his senses at last. The guns were reloaded, and orders given to depress them as much as possible, that is, to point their muzzles downwards, but not a shot was to be fired until the frigate came actually alongside the chase. Such was the poor privateer's sentence of death ; severe, indeed, but quite necessary, for he appeared resolved never to yield.

On we flew, right down upon our prey, like the enormous roc bird of the "Arabian Nights." We had ceased firing our bow-chasers, that the smoke might not stand between us and the lesson we meant to read to our resolute pupil, so that there was "silence deep as death" along our decks, and doubtless on his ; for he likewise had intermitted his firing, and seemed prepared to meet his fate, and go to the bottom like a man. It was possible, also, we thought, that he might only be watching, even in his last extremity, to take advantage of any

negligence on our part, which should allow him to haul suddenly across our bows and, by getting on a wind, have a chance of escaping. This chance, it is true, was very small; for not one of his sails was in a condition to stand such a breeze as was now blowing, unless when running nearly before it. But we had seen enough, during the two days we had been together, to apprehend that his activity was at least a match for ours; and as he had already shown that he did not care a fig for shot, he might bend new sails as fast as we could.

At all events, we were resolved to make him surrender, or run him down; such was our duty, and that the Frenchman knew right well. He waited, however, until our flying jib-boom end was almost over his taffrail, and the narrow space between us was filled with a confused, boiling heap of foam, partly caused by his bows and partly by ours. Then, and not till then, when he must have seen into our ports, and along the decks, which were lighted up fore and aft, he first gave signal of surrender.

The manner in which this was done by the captain of the privateer was as spirited and characteristic as any part of his previous conduct. The night was very dark; but the ships were so near to one another that we could distinguish the tall figure of a man mount the weather main-rigging of the brig, where he stood erect, with a lantern in his hand, held out at right-angles to his body. Had this light not been seen, or its purpose not understood, or had it been delayed for twenty seconds longer, the frigate must, almost in spite of herself, have gone right over him, and the salvo of a double-shotted broadside would have done the last and fitting honours over the Frenchman's grave.

Even as it was, it cost us some trouble to avoid running him down; for, although the helm was put over immediately, our lee quarter, as the ship flew up into the wind, almost grazed his weather gangway. In passing, we ordered him to bring-to likewise. This he did as soon as we gave him room; and we were still close enough to see the effect of such a manœuvre at such a moment. Every stitch of sail he had set was blown, in

one moment, clean out of the bolt-ropes. His halyards, tacks, and sheets had all been racked aloft,* so that everything not made of canvas remained in its place; the yards at the mast-heads, and the booms rigged out; while the empty leech and foot-ropes hung down in festoons, where, but a minute before, the tattered sails had been spread.

We fared, comparatively speaking, not much better; for although, the instant the course was altered, the order was given to let fly the topsail halyards, and every other necessary rope, and although the downhaul tackles, clewlines, and buntlines were already manned, in expectation of this evolution, we succeeded with great difficulty in saving the fore and maintopsails; but the topgallantsails were blown to pieces. All the flying kites went off in a crack, whisking far away to leeward, like dried forest leaves in autumn.

It may be supposed that the chase was now completely over, and that we had nothing further to do than take possession of our prize. Not at all! It was found next to impossible to board the brig, or, at least, it seemed so dangerous that our captain was unwilling to hazard a boat and crew until daylight came. The privateer, having no sail set to keep her steady, became so unmanageable that the sea made a clean breach over all, rendering it out of the question to board her on the weather side. Nor was she more easily approachable to leeward, where a tangled network of broken spars, half-torn sails, shattered booms, and smacking ropes' ends formed such a line of "*chevaux de frise*" from the cathead to the counter, that all attempts to get near her on that side were useless.

The gale increased before morning to such a pitch, that as there was still a doubt if any boat could live, the intention of boarding our prize was of course further delayed. But we took care to keep close to her, a little to windward, in order to watch her proceedings as narrowly as possible. It did not

* That is to say, secured with "seizings," so that in the event of the halyards, etc., being shot through, the sails should not come down, or fly out from the yards—a common device in sailing vessels upon going into action.—ED.

escape our notice, in the meantime, that our friend (he was no longer our foe, though not yet our prisoner) went on quietly, even in the height of the gale, shifting his wounded yards, reeving new ropes, and bending fresh sails. This caused us to redouble our vigilance during the morning; and the event showed that we had good need for such watchfulness. About three o'clock in the afternoon, the brig having fallen a little to leeward, and a furious squall of wind and rain coming on at the same moment, she suddenly bore up, and set off once more, right before the wind. At the height of the squall we totally lost sight of our prize; and such a hubbub I hardly recollect to have heard in my life before.

"Where is she? Who was looking out? Where did you see her last?" and a hundred similar questions, reproaches, scolds, and the whole of the ugly family of oaths were poured out in abundance; some on the privateer, whose adroitness had thus over-reached our vigilance; some upon those who, by their neglect, had given him the opportunity; and many imprecations were muttered merely to express the depth of anger and disappointment at this stupid loss of a good thing, which had cost so much trouble to catch.

All this passed over in the first burst; sail was made at once, the topsails, close-reefed, were sheeted home like lightning, and off we dashed into the thick of the squall, in search of our lost treasure. At each mast-head and at every yard-arm there was planted a lookout-man, while the fore-castle hammock netting was filled with volunteer spy-glasses. For about a quarter of an hour dead silence reigned over the whole ship, during which anxious interval every eye was strained to the utmost; for no one knew exactly where to look. There was, indeed, no certainty of our not actually running past the privateer; and it would not have surprised us much, when the squall cleared up, had we seen him a mile or two to windward, far beyond our reach. These fears were put an end to by the sharp-eyed captain of the foretop, who had perched himself on the jib-boom end, calling out with a voice of the greatest glee.



From a drawing by J. Fraser.

A PLUCKY LITTLE PRIVATEER.
The French skipper explains matters.



"There he goes! there he goes! right ahead! under his topsails and foresail!"

And sure enough, there we saw him, springing along from wave to wave, with his masts bending forward like reeds, under the pressure of sail enough to have laid him on his beam ends had he broached-to.

In a very few minutes we were again alongside, and doubtless the Frenchman thought we were at last going to execute summary vengeance upon him for his treachery, as we called it. Nothing daunted, however, by the style in which we bore down upon him, the gallant commander of this pretty little eggshell of a vessel placed himself on the weather quarter, and, with a speaking-trumpet in his hand, indicated by gesticulations a wish to be heard. This could not well be refused; and we steered as close as we could pass along without bringing the two vessels in contact, or risking the entanglement of the yards, when we rolled towards one another.

"I have been compelled to bear up," he called out in French, "otherwise the brig must have gone to the bottom. The sea broke over us in such a way that I have been obliged, as you may perceive, to throw all my guns, boats, and spars overboard. We have now several feet of water in the hold, in consequence of your shot, which, you may likewise observe, have nearly destroyed our upper works. If, therefore, you obliged me to heave-to, I cannot keep the vessel afloat one hour in such weather."

"Will you make no further attempt to escape?" asked the captain of the *Endymion*.

"As yet I have made none," he replied firmly; "I struck to you already; I am your prize; and feeling as a man of honour, I do not consider myself at liberty to escape, even if I had the power. I bore up when the squall came on as a matter of necessity. If you will allow me to run before the wind along with you, till the weather moderates, you may take possession of the brig when you please; if not, I must go to the bottom."

Such was the substance of a conversation, very difficult to

keep up across the tempest, which was now whistling at a great rate. To have brought the ships again to the wind would have been fatal, for the privateer must have been swamped instantly. Therefore, although we grievously mistrusted our companion, we sailed along most lovingly together, as if we had been the best possible friends, for about sixty or seventy miles. During the greater part of this interval the frigate had scarcely any sail set at all; and we sometimes expected to see our little friend pop fairly under water, and so elude us by foundering, or escape by witchcraft; by the protection of which, in the opinion of the Johnnies, he had been so long kept from us.

At eight o'clock in the evening it began to moderate, and by midnight we succeeded in getting a boat on board of the prize, after a run of between three and four hundred miles. Such is the scale of nautical sport! And where, I now beg to ask, is the fox-hunting, or the piracy, or anything else, more exciting than this noble game?

The brig proved to be the *Milan* privateer, from St. Malo, of fourteen guns and eighty men, many of whom were unfortunately wounded by our shot, and several killed. She had been at sea eighteen days, but had made no captures. In the morning we stopped the leaks, exchanged the prisoners for a prize crew, and put our heads towards the Cove of Cork again, chuckling at our own success in having nabbed the very vessel we were sent after. But this part of the exploit, it seemed, we had no title to claim credit for, since the *Milan* had not seen the land, nor been within many miles of it. This was a trifle, however, and we returned right merrily to tell our long story of the three days' chase.

The captain's name was Lepelletier—I have pleasure in recording it—M. Pierre Lepelletier, of St. Malo; and wherever he goes, I will venture to say he can meet no braver or more resolute man than himself.

Long before he came on board he had well earned the respect of his captors, high and low; and his manners and information, after we became personally acquainted with him, raised him still more in general estimation.

One day, when I was walking with him under the half-deck, I overheard two of the sailmakers, who were mending the holes his shot had made in our foretopsail, conversing about the chase, the prize, and the prisoners ; the only topics which occupied our thoughts for weeks afterwards. One of them laid down his palm and needle, and, looking very significantly to our side of the deck, exclaimed :

“I say, Bill, isn't it a pity that the French captain, there, isn't an Englishman ?”

I lost no time in translating this observation to the person whom it most concerned, who declared it was by far the highest compliment he had been honoured with since he came on board the *Endymion*.

A STARVATION VOYAGE*

ON the 17th of November, 1804, the *Phaeton*, a fine frigate, sailed from St. Mary's, on the east coast of Madagascar, for Bombay, in company with several other vessels. The *Phaeton* was commanded by Captain George Cockburn, a very good seaman and an expert navigator, who took a great interest in the young officers serving under him, instructing them carefully in the theory and practice of nautical astronomy.

Among these youngsters was one James Scott, a lad of about fourteen, who appears to have paid especial attention to the instruction given by the captain, and so became quite an expert observer with the quadrant, and even had considerable success in obtaining the longitude accurately by means of what is termed a "lunar"—a process which I will not attempt to explain to you, but you may take my word for it that it is an operation which demands the utmost care on the part of the observer, and is not reckoned as absolutely reliable even under the most favourable circumstances. I don't quite know why so much importance was attached to lunars at that time, as pretty good chronometers had been in use for over thirty years, and I suppose these were supplied to ships of the navy, affording a far less cumbrous means of finding the longitude. However this may be, the point I wish to note is, that young Scott rather "fancied" himself as a lunarian observer—and not without some justification, either.

* This story is taken from "Recollections of a Naval Officer," by Admiral Sir James Scott, published in 1834. I prefer to tell it in my own way, quoting the author where advisable.—ED,

The day after the squadron left St. Mary's, a strange sail was seen, was chased until the wind dropped, was then chased in the boats of the *Tremendous* until the wind sprang up again, and she sailed away from the boats, which had then, of course, to be picked up, during which operation the *Phaeton* passed ahead in pursuit of the stranger, which, however, had got a long start, and at ten o'clock was lost sight of in the darkness; and she probably would have got clean away, had not her skipper made use of a very stale and well-worn dodge. He constructed a small raft with a short staff on it, to which he hung a lantern, and launched the whole arrangement overboard.

The twinkling light seen ahead was in due course reported by the lookout-man. Captain Cockburn smiled, and immediately ordered the ship's course to be altered so as to cut off the stranger, who, of course, had steered away from the decoy lantern, hoping that the *Phaeton* would blunder on after this will-o'-the-wisp.

Well, she was overhauled and captured, and proved to be a French vessel, the *Minerve*, bound to Madagascar from Mauritius; but her course was now to be laid, under English colours, for India.

And now came unexpected joy for young Scott. An old master's mate was ordered to go as prize-master, and Scott was told off to accompany him as a kind of first lieutenant. You may imagine how a lad of fourteen would welcome such a job. This is how he expresses himself on the subject:

"My arrangements were soon completed. In the course of five minutes my traps were in the boat, and in five more I was installed as second in command on board the captured vessel. My ambitious feelings were now, as may be supposed, really gratified. To be selected from the youngsters as capable of filling a situation of trust was a mark of confidence on the part of the captain that made my heart bound with joy; in short, I was fairly intoxicated with what I regarded as unexampled good fortune. To have the charge of a watch, to be united in the command and entire direction of a ship with the

master's mate, Mr. Fowler, was something so perfectly overwhelming that I was only roused into a conviction of its reality by old Jack Fowler giving me charge of the deck."*

Jack Fowler was what was termed one of the "old school." He was second mate of a merchant vessel, out of which he was "pressed," in the unceremonious fashion of that time, into the navy as a seaman, but was soon afterwards made "master's mate"—*i.e.* an assistant to the master, who navigated the ship, and was himself upon a different footing from the other officers.

Fowler was an excellent, good-hearted fellow, very old for his rank, with a "rotundity of person sufficiently ample for a commodore of the first class"; a thorough, practical seaman, as would be expected, but a very poor navigator, who relied upon "dead reckoning," with an observation at noon for latitude, and regarded those who went in for lunar observations as "star-gazing lunatics." The *Minerve* had, of course, no chronometer on board, and good old Jack Fowler would probably not have known how to use it if she had.

Only two Frenchmen were left on board—the mate, and a passenger who turned out to have been cook to the French Admiral Linois, and was now about to commence trading on his own account with the savings which, I suppose, all admirals' cooks succeed in laying up. He accepted his change of destination in a philosophical spirit, declared that it was "the fortune of war," and offered to place his culinary skill at the disposal of Jack Fowler and his men, which he did with great success, *so long as there was anything to cook.*

* Sir James Scott alludes to this officer as "F—I—r," leaving out the vowels; but I have preferred to call him Fowler, as I dislike "dis-vowelled" names, and it can do old "Jack" no harm, after all this time, even if I have got his name wrong. Scott alludes to his captain as "Captain C—," and to himself occasionally as "Mr. S—," which seems absurd. Any one would know that Cockburn was the captain of the *Phaeton* by looking up a navy list or record of some kind, so why make such a secret of it? And as the author puts his own name on the title-page, the docking of it in the text is ridiculous; it is a good yarn, nevertheless.—ED.

Though there were only two Frenchmen left on board, there was a third prisoner, who was calmly seated at the table when Fowler went down to breakfast on the morning after the capture; a handsome young woman of brown complexion—a Madagascar princess, in fact, who was returning to her native country.

But Fowler would have none of her. Rushing on deck, he made the signal that he desired to send a boat on board the *Phaeton*; and, at his request, the fair passenger was transhipped, to the great amusement of his old shipmates, who chaffed him ever afterwards about his deadly fear of having a "petticoat" on board. As things turned out, it was just as well he got rid of her.

The removal of the brown princess afforded opportunity of representing the scanty supply of provisions on board the prize. The *Phaeton* was none too well off, but as much as could be spared was sent to the *Minerve*, and they sailed on in company for a day or so, when Fowler found himself left astern, the squadron out of sight. His orders, should this occur, were to steer for Point de Galle, in the Island of Ceylon, about two thousand three hundred miles distant.

The greater part of the prize crew were Lascars, taken out of a Dutch Indiaman, and young Scott found this very trying at first. It made him very nervous, when in charge of the deck, to reflect that, should a heavy squall come down, or any emergency arise, he could not make them understand a word he said. However, he put a good face on it, and was at some pains to acquire a knowledge of the Lascars' sea-jargon, since they showed no disposition to learn his; and in a fortnight or so he had got the hang of it pretty well, and was quite content to say, "Burra guy braace" and "Terickity guy braace lug" when he wanted the topsail yards braced up, which was really a great concession for a British naval officer!

And now came in the rough-and-ready "rule of thumb" navigation of old Jack Fowler. They had, as I have said, about two thousand three hundred miles to go, as the crow flies, and they had just about enough provisions to last, with

care, for an average passage of this extent, so it was evident that they could not afford to take any liberties with the route; but the way in which they set about getting to Point de Galle, which lay to the north-east, was really very futile. The idea was, to get across somehow until they were exactly south of their port, and then run up to it. This was termed "running down the longitude," and you will understand at once that in doing this they were traversing two sides of a triangle, which, as dear old Euclid tells us, are together greater than the third side. But they could not even run straight across; they must needs steer away south, hoping to *get out* of the south-east wind—which was a fine "beam" wind for their destination*—and find a *westerly* wind to blow them across to the required longitude, when they thought they would be quite happy, and bowl away north for Ceylon.

But they did not find a westerly wind, though they actually sailed further south than the Cape of Good Hope to look for it, and were a good six hundred miles further from Point de Galle than when they started. Admiral Scott does not seem to think that there was anything very much out of the way in doing this, and even hints that, by persevering further to the southward, they might have found the desired west wind; so I suppose that steering as nearly as possible direct for your port, when the wind is fair, is a more modern "invention"—it would have paid Jack Fowler well to have done so, even at some risk of making a bad shot.

"And so," says Scott, "this unexpected disappointment had the effect of causing no little anxiety to Fowler and myself, who alone were aware that at the expiration of three weeks we were farther from our port than at starting."

Cause enough, indeed, for anxiety—a smart vessel, well sailed, would have been at Point de Galle by that time, or

* It must be borne in mind, however, that the north-east monsoon would be blowing at this time of the year, and as they approached Ceylon it would be against them; but I cannot imagine that a modern sailing ship would run away to the southward of the Cape of Good Hope in making this passage.—ED.

very near it; and what about their provisions? After careful stock-taking, the allowance was reduced; and then, relinquishing the quest of that west wind, they sailed northward, with very baffling and variable winds, until, fifteen days later, they were in eleven degrees of latitude, or about, say, 1,500 miles from their destination—and here they were nearly stationary for ten days.

Meanwhile, young Scott, mistrusting his superior's navigation, employed himself at spare moments, when the heavenly bodies were suitably placed, in taking lunar observations for the longitude—luckily, he had found some necessary information for this purpose in the cabin—and he found that his reckoning always disagreed with Fowler's, the difference increasing day by day, and invariably in the same direction, so that he began to think that he was right and his skipper wrong; but how was he to muster courage to say so? He, a boy of fourteen, to lay down the law to an old master's mate!

However, after a fresh and more convincing proof, he made the venture. "Accordingly I brought forward, as I hoped, unanswerable proofs in support of the position I had assumed; but I had miscalculated my powers of rhetoric: an address to the winds would have proved equally successful; I was laughed at and derided. It was the presumption of a boy wishing to 'teach his granny to suck eggs.' The ridicule with which he treated my pretensions had no effect in undermining my confidence, which each succeeding observation only tended to confirm."

Right or wrong, things were getting very serious; and once more they steered south to find that west wind, with scarcely a month's supply of provisions remaining, even at the cruelly reduced rate.

No success; and now, with starvation threatening, the bitter question of running for Mauritius—then a French possession, known as the Isle of France—and giving themselves up, was seriously discussed. Fowler could not stomach it, however—it was too humiliating to a British seaman—and they prepared for a desperate encounter with the grim tyrant Famine.

"We had been victualled below the full allowance for two months. Seven weeks of that time had expired; it was Christmas, and we were nearly 3,000 miles from our port, by the only track left us to pursue (the north-east monsoon blowing to the northward of the equator), with no hope of our remaining store holding out to support us thither. All hands were now summoned, and our true situation was made known. The provisions were again overhauled, and a poor exhibition it proved; ten days would suffice for the consumption of our miserable pittance of meat, and though the bread, distributed at one biscuit per diem to each man, might last a month, yet these said biscuits, having been scooped out very cleverly by the cockroaches, were, by such officious doings, reduced to something less than half their original weight and substance. Our only hope of succour was based on the slender chance of falling in with some vessel."

With this dismal prospect, the ship's head was once more set northward; and a few days later a large vessel was seen, apparently in chase of the *Minerve*. Taking her for a French cruiser, they immediately ran to the southward; the stranger altered course in chase, thus confirming their first impression, and every stitch of sail was set to escape.

Then their melancholy state of destitution presented itself, and a desperate alternative was resolved upon—why not chase instead of being chased? Better run the risk of being made prisoners of war, than starve to death at sea. So they altered course accordingly, when the stranger immediately became shy, and they saw, as they neared her, that she was probably a captured English ship, with a French prize crew on board. Fowler got his four pop-guns on one side, and prepared, if possible, to run alongside the other and board her—at any rate, it appeared certain that, one way or the other, they would obtain relief, for it seemed very improbable that the vessel could escape them.

Coming within half a mile, the *Minerve* hoisted Hamburg colours; the other made no response beyond hauling up a little to clear them. They neared her to a couple of hundred yards,

then hoisted English colours, and fired a shot across her bows. This only frightened the stranger, who immediately made more sail, flew across their bows within pistol-shot, and was off before the wind, sailing two feet to their one. She showed no colours, and fired not so much as a musket from first to last.

And so the unhappy crew of the *Minerve* were left to face their misfortunes, cursing the French ship in futile rage—illogical and unreasoning rage, for what could the French skipper, with a small prize crew, conclude, but that they meant to capture him?

"I had hitherto," says Admiral Scott, "kept up my spirits tolerably well, but I gave way under this bitter disappointment, and on retiring to my cot burst into tears. The picture I drew to myself of our probable fate banished sleep from my eyelids, and the summons to relieve the deck proved a welcome intrusion upon my melancholy thoughts."

There was one alleviation of their misfortunes, which probably saved some of them from ultimate insanity—there was plenty of water on board, the vessel having been intended to ship a cargo of bullocks; also hay and straw in quantities, but this was not likely to be of much use in sustaining human life.

Making a thorough overhaul of the hold, they discovered two cases of claret, each containing six dozen bottles. This proved very valuable. The cases were emptied, the bottles counted before all hands, and it was resolved that each person should have a wineglassful, and no more, morning and evening. Some bran was also found, of which they made thin gruel; thin bran-gruel!—think of it! Scott says: "It was as sour as verjuice, and played the very devil with our intestines; nevertheless, we had not the heart to throw the tormenting beverage away. It was literally Hobson's choice, and so we continued to drink and suffer, and drink again."

Within about four hundred miles of Dondra Head, the south point of Ceylon, they were again becalmed, knowing full well that a belt of the north-east monsoon lay between.

Not an ounce of meat was left, and the effects of their deprivations were becoming plainly visible in the faces of the crew. In another fortnight every crumb of biscuit had disappeared, and the realities of famine came home to them with agonising sharpness.

"We tried boiled hay, but it yielded no nourishment. We then resorted to the raw hide that covered the lanyards of the lower and topmast rigging. It was boiled, scraped, and when that failed in eradicating the hair, it was submitted to the ordeal of fire to effect our purpose, and then boiled again. This afforded us some slight relief, for we were ravenous; but the mastication it required may be imagined. I enjoyed the scanty meal, if such it could be called. Not a particle of hide was left upon any part of the rigging. A cat reduced to skin and bones had previously been sacrificed to our hunger. Even at this distance of time it is painful to recall the scenes of distress that were constantly before me: the loud lamentations of some, the silent despair of others; and frequently have I heard the suggestion of self-destruction as the best mode of avoiding further protracted suffering. I can scarcely depict my own agonised thoughts and feelings as each succeeding day appeared to render more certain the fate impending over us. The idea of perishing in so miserable, so ignoble a manner, far away from friends and country, was too much for my young mind to bear, and as the becalmed sails flapped against the masts, I gave way to uncontrollable grief."

"At times I fancied I could devour anything that was placed before me; at others a sickness stole over me that made me loathe the very idea of food; then again hunger resumed its overbearing sway. The claret and abundance of water proved our salvation, for all sorts of food had failed us."

Then, suddenly, came a gleam of hope: a fine westerly breeze sprang up, sending the ship along at a speed of eight or nine knots; and even while the men were trimming

the sails, a shoal of large fish—bonito and albacore—approached.

Scott, young as he was, was the one to make use of this chance. Seizing the grains—a sort of trident, with several points, used for spearing this kind of fish—he ran forward and seated himself on the spritsail yard, under the bowsprit, anxiously awaiting his chance.

He was successful: in three or four minutes, with the assistance of others, he had speared two large fish: then, alas! his weapon stuck in a big albacore, which broke the line, and went off with the grains sticking in it—a great misfortune.

However, the welcome breeze and the catch of fresh fish put new life into every one; all sail was got on the ship, and she bowled along northward, reducing every hour the distance separated them from their port.

With almost heroic wisdom and self-restraint the seventy or eighty pounds of fish was carefully hoarded. In spite of their desperate craving, only half a pound per man was served out, the remainder being salted and placed in the pickle-tub. "Looks of despair and misery gave place to something akin to joy and congratulation; and though our rate of sailing dropped to five or six knots after sunset, the hope of reaching Hog Island,* where we could at least procure some rice, appeared so probable, that it did not damp the bright vision that had resuscitated us."

Scott had, however, but little confidence in Fowler's estimate of their position. He took to his lunars again, and warned the prize-master and the crew that they were much farther to the westward than they imagined—pretty nearly six degrees of longitude, in fact, according to Scott's computation. It is impossible not to admire the self-reliance and courage of this boy of fourteen under such trying circumstances. He refused to permit himself to be deluded by false hopes, and the absolute discredit with which his

* Hog Island is off the coast of Sumatra, a considerable distance to the Eastward of Ceylon.—Ed.

warning was received by Fowler and the rest moved him not at all; he stood alone in his opinion—and, unhappily for them all, he was right.

The wind continued to decrease, and the ship only crept along; but Fowler—this was two days after they caught the fish—persisted that they would sight Hog Island on the following day.

For three days they crawled along in almost a dead calm. Only a small quantity of the fish remained, and this was now, from imperfect curing, so putrid that only starving men could have borne the smell of it, let alone eating it; but they devoured it, as Scott says, "with the appetite of ogres."

No land on the fourth day, and the north-east monsoon blowing them directly away from Hog Island. Poor old Jack Fowler, realising his error, gave way almost to despair in the cabin; young Scott cheered him up, pointing out that if Fowler's reckoning was wrong and his own correct they must be so much the nearer to Dondra Head, in Ceylon, and should haul up for it; but Fowler was as obstinate as only an ignorant man can be.

"Do you suppose, sir," he said, "that you know better than I do, who came to sea before you were born?"

"No, but you may be mistaken; besides, you will only act upon the safe side by getting into the latitude of the Head, well to the eastward."

"Very well; the course we are now steering will bring us into the latitude at least two degrees to the eastward."

"Say to the westward," I replied.

"Jemmy, my boy, you fancy yourself much more knowing in navigation than your neighbours."

"I am sorry you think so; but the lunars—they all agree. How do you account for that?"

"I tell you again, they are all nonsense," and so on. He was quite immovable.

Two days later there was not a morsel of food of any kind left. A sail was sighted, and they gave chase, running a considerable distance to the south-west before they gave up.

Scott entreated Fowler, almost in frenzy, to haul up farther north, or they would miss Ceylon altogether, and must perish; and at length he consented. On the following day, at noon, Dondra Head was only 190 miles distant, the breeze was fresh, and they carried on all the sail possible; but their deliverance appeared, to their agonised minds and bodies, still immeasurably removed.

"We had now arrived at that pitch of bodily suffering, of mortal agony, when the mind of man, though emanating from the divine essence of his Maker, throws aside all the noble attributes of his nature, and with the ferocity of beasts of prey thirsts for the blood of his unoffending fellow-creatures. My blood froze in its current through my veins when I found the intention of sacrificing a prisoner animating the death-like countenances of the crew; and yet these men had hearts that once had throbbed with every kindly feeling, and would have recoiled in horror from the spilling of human blood except in battle. Inscrutable are the ways of God, who sometimes permits an extent of human agony only to point out to us what abject things we may become. I do not think any amount of suffering would have tempted me to support nature upon such dreadful means; but it is presumptuous, at this distance of time, to pronounce upon what my final resolution might have been in a situation where I was goaded by despair and beset with the ravening pangs of hunger.

"Roused almost to madness by the intended sacrifice, I besought the fiercest of the determined men around me to postpone so sickening an immolation to the shrine of dire necessity until twenty-four hours had elapsed, when I doubted not that their self-denial would be rewarded by the sight of land."

And he prevailed, this plucky boy of fourteen—they promised him. He tells it all, eight-and-twenty years later, very simply, and with the full responsibility of mature manhood. One cannot question the truth of the story.

Next morning, at eight o'clock, it was blowing fresh from the north-east, with a thick, hazy atmosphere. Young Scott

reckoned that they must be within thirty miles of the land—he was the only one on the lookout. Hope deferred, agony of mind and body had dulled the senses of the men, and they lay about inert and despairing. Fowler was below.

“Except the man at the wheel, I was the only being on deck, leaning over the weather gangway, intently gazing in the direction I expected to see the land. The mist was clearing away, when, on the verge of the horizon, I fancied I perceived the looming of the coast. My eyeballs were now strained enough to start from their sockets; I scarcely breathed; the throbbing of my heart, as each succeeding minute strengthened the hopes and fears that by turns agitated my bosom, increased to such painful intensity that my head grew dizzy and unreal visions floated before my aching sight. Suddenly the sun burst forth in all its glory, the vapoury mist rolled away, and discovered to my anxious view the island of Ceylon in all its beautiful variety of hill and valley, and our true position at once determined by the well-known landmarks of the Elephant and Chimney Hills. I was transfixed to the spot, no cry of joy escaped my lips, a revulsion of feeling shook my frame to the annihilation of speech or action; it lasted but a minute, nature resumed her sway, and oh! with what uncontrollable ecstasy I shouted, ‘’Tis the land!—’tis the land!’”

Poor lad! Fowler would not at first believe him; but soon he came on deck to be convinced, and the midshipman fell upon his knees in a passion of tears as he poured out aloud his thanks to God for their deliverance, which Fowler generously acknowledged, in the presence of all hands, was due in a great degree to the skill of his young subordinate.

The poor French cook, his office so long a sinecure, had crawled into his hammock many days previously, awaiting death. Now, scarcely able to walk, he crept on deck, and, throwing his arms round young Scott, after hearing Fowler’s speech, he cried, “God bless you!—God bless you, Mr. Scott!” and fell on his knees weeping.

Their troubles were not quite over. During the night a

heavy squall came, followed by a dead calm, and by morning they had drifted a long way from their port; but a large vessel was becalmed a couple of miles from them. They determined to send a boat to her for provisions; but a breeze springing up, she ran—they chased—each displayed English colours, the *Minerve* with French tricolor below; but on ran the stranger, making a signal for a pilot as she neared Point de Galle, and opening on the *Minerve* with her stern chasers. She replied, thinking she was enforcing the pilot signal; and the stranger, without waiting for her pilot, fled into port! The *Minerve* followed, but received a very strong hint, in the form of a shotted gun or two from the fort, to anchor.

Well, the other had carried in a marvellous story of an encounter with a French privateer outside, and implored the commandant to sink the *Minerve* without delay! That gentleman, however, thought better to have an interview first with Jack Fowler, and after that these poor wretches had food sent off, and, of course, made themselves very ill by eating too much at first.

The two French prisoners were sent to the Isle of France, it being considered that they had earned their liberty by their sufferings. "They took leave of me," says Scott, "with the warmest gratitude, particularly Monsieur le Cuisinier, who on our arrival at Point de Galle had resumed his functions, much to his own and our satisfaction."

MY FRIEND MR. GREEN

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

MY acquaintance with Mr. Green commenced on the day of the Entry Examination for Naval Cadets, at the Old College in Portsmouth Dockyard, in the year—well, never mind about the year; it was more than five-and-forty years ago. Let that suffice.

Some forty or fifty youngsters, from twelve to fourteen years of age, were assembled at the college, mostly under the sheltering care of parents or guardians, to undergo the very mild test of the entry examination of those days. I believe we all came through successfully, and certainly those who did not richly deserved their fate.

Mr. Green was one of the few who were unattended by any parental or other escort. A tall, rather broad-shouldered lad, with a remarkably small head and piercing, ferrety eyes, he stood aloof from the crowd with discouraging taciturnity, and it was not until the ordeal was over that he exchanged a word with any one—and then he did not commence the brief conversation.

Finding myself rubbing elbows with him, as we stood about in the quadrangle, my elation over my assured success in the ridiculously easy exam. bubbled over.

“Not much of a grind, was it?” I remarked. “What language did you take? I knew that bit of Cæsar by heart——”

“I? Oh! I took French; I was brought up in France,” he replied. And the intonation of his voice and the roll of

his "r's" unmistakably testified to the fact; also his trick of almost invariably prefacing the reply to a personal question or remark with that interrogative "I?"

"Well, I suppose we can go now," he continued. "I daresay we shall meet on board the *Britannia* by and by. My name's Green."

His voice was unexpectedly deep for a lad of his age, and his manner matured and assured.

I felt rather sorry for him as I went off to join my father and brother at the George Hotel in High Street—he seemed so lonely.

We did, of course, meet on board the *Britannia* some weeks later; but our acquaintance did not ripen there, for Mr. Green held aloof from all the other cadets, going on shore alone and scarcely ever initiating conversation. There was certainly something unusual and peculiar about him, and it would have been very natural if he had been made the butt of the more self-assertive and humorous among us; but this was by no means the case. He was left severely alone, as though by universal consent, and it was not long before there were yarns afloat about him. He was always very flush of cash, and indulged freely in the most expensive description of "tuck," which he never offered to share. He was said to have no "belongings," but was supposed, for some reason, to be intimately connected in some way with persons of exalted position; he may have hinted this himself, for he was obviously conceited in an inordinate degree.

During our sojourn in the training-ship there were two instances of the mysterious disappearance of money from cadets' chests—in spite of its having been locked up in the "private till" provided for that purpose—and there was a sort of feeling that Mr. Green was the culprit, though there was not the smallest evidence to justify such a conclusion.

Well, in due course we passed out of the *Britannia*—I with a first-class certificate, which conferred an immediate advance to the rank of midshipman, Mr. Green, by virtue of a second-class, remaining a naval cadet; and upon joining the *Victory*,

to await appointment to a sea-going ship, I found Mr. Green already installed on board.

To my surprise, he became immediately and ostentatiously friendly.

"Hallo, old man!" he said in his deep voice, "I'm awfully glad you have come here—we can go ashore together."

I am afraid I made no very gushing response to this somewhat flattering selection of myself as Mr. Green's companion, and I certainly had no intention of devoting myself exclusively to him when I went on shore. However, he displayed no coolness at my lack of enthusiasm over the prospect of such constant intercourse; and I may say at once that he had his own way, for his was a far stronger personality than mine, and I had not the moral courage definitely to refuse.

I am now convinced that Mr. Green's guardians, whoever they were, had misrepresented his age to the authorities. In those days, or at least at the time of his supposed birth, registration was not compulsory, and the date of a candidate's birth was sworn to before a magistrate, for the satisfaction of the Admiralty, before he was permitted to present himself for examination. Mr. Green, by reason of the existing regulations, should not have been at this time much over fifteen at the outside; but I am persuaded that he was a couple of years older.

There was very little to do on board the *Victory* in those days, and consequently our visits to the shore were of daily occurrence, for the fatherly old gentleman who was then commander of the ship never dreamed of refusing our applications for leave.

"Now, Keen," Mr. Green would say, with a friendly slap on the shoulder, "come ashore, man!"

And ashore we invariably went in company, first changing into plain clothes—forbidden alike by the Admiralty instructions, the Port orders, and the regulations of the ship, which ordinances were, however, habitually disregarded and set at naught.

I was much impressed on these occasions by the thrifty

habits of Mr. Green, the principle of which he was good enough to explain to me with much lucidity. His theory was, that if you do not change your gold, you are far less likely to spend it; and, as a practical illustration of the efficacy of this principle, he contrived never to have any other coinage in his pocket. I was at the trouble of pointing out to him, with some diffidence, that absolute observance of this rule might occasionally be attended by inconvenience; but he stood to his guns like a man, and any little difficulty which might arise was invariably solved by an appeal to my not very bulging pocket. "You pay, old man," my friend would say, when a sixpence for a boatman or other trifle was demanded on our excursions; and pay I did, though I could not help feeling that he carried his theory to extremes, as these little sums were never refunded, a condition which was, at least, implied. But he was so friendly, and affected such unfeigned pleasure in my companionship, that I was always somewhat shy about broaching the subject; and Mr. Green, no doubt from motives of delicacy, was equally silent.

However, the day soon arrived upon which—proud moment!—I saw my name, together with that of Mr. Green, gazetted on appointment to H.M.S. *Reliable*, at Devonport; and we started one fine May morning, armed with so-called "free" railway passes—the fare being, however, subsequently deducted from our very limited pay—to join our ship.

This trip afforded an unusually favourable opportunity for the exercise of Mr. Green's economical principles. Impressed, no doubt, with the importance of so long a journey, as compared with our former petty excursions, he had provided himself upon this occasion with nothing but a ten-pound note, and we commenced our travels in the usual manner—that is to say, I paid the boatman's extravagant demand for the conveyance of ourselves and our baggage, including our sea-chests, on shore, and a further sum for portorage to the station.

In due course we arrived at Muddlestoke, an important junction on our route. I have not been there for many years,

but in those days it was a most remarkable station. The ingenuity displayed by the station-master and porters to get you into a mess of some kind was simply masterly. There were always two trains from different lines to be joined up here, and each of these officials had a separate tale to tell as to when you were going on, or whether it was safe to get out. Many a simple naval officer has been successfully trapped there and left forlorn upon the platform, while his belongings travelled joyfully on to his destination, where, upon his arrival many hours later, he would spend several days in unearthing them, and sundry shillings for their safe custody when discovered.

However, Mr. Green and I contrived somehow to elude the wiles of the enemy, though we did get out and visit the frowsy refreshment room, where he imbibed some fluid which they were pleased to call pale ale, while I contented myself with a horrible concoction labelled "lemonade," and we both devoured some tough pastry of ancient origin—for all of which treat, of course, I paid.

We joined our ship on the following day—there was no earthly reason why we should not have gone on board that evening, but my friend preferred to put up at an hotel, where, after an expensive dinner, he greatly astonished me by his proficiency at billiards, a game of which I was then totally ignorant. He played a casual guest for a sum of money, which he won by a narrow margin; but even to my unsophisticated mind it was apparent that he was "playing dark"—in fact, I am now convinced that he "rooked" this confiding individual of a comfortable amount, out of which he cheerfully paid his share of the bill next morning.

The *Reliable*, a fine wooden steam frigate, newly commissioned, lay in a large basin in the dockyard, nearly ready for sea; and upon presenting ourselves, in our brand-new uniform, at the easy hour of noon, we found ourselves immediately the objects of sarcastic comment, mingled with the menace of personal chastisement if we tried any more of our "Peter Simple" or "Midshipman Easy" games—for it

appeared that there was an impression aboard that we had been kicking up our heels in Devonport for a week or so, and thus imposing upon our messmates a certain amount of extra duty, in which we should rightly have borne our share. I do not to this day know how this idea got about; our denial, however, went for very little, and we were abruptly requested to "dry up, and not give any cheek."

The gun-room mess—formerly known as the midshipman's berth—of a large frigate contained men and boys of all ages. There were three sublieutenants, a second master, an assistant-paymaster—all grown men—some be-whiskered senior midshipmen, and so down the scale to our humble selves, very small and insignificant persons, as we were soon given to understand, whose place it was to be seen and not heard.

Mr. Green did not readily accept this lowly position, putting on a staid "I'm as old as you are" sort of air, and joining unasked in the conversation of the "oldsters"—a liberty for which he suffered, being very brutally struck in the face by a grown-up midshipman of thrice his strength for presuming "to put his oar in."

Before we had been many hours on board, Harland, the senior sublieutenant—a very good fellow, not addicted to bullying or other vices—told us to look sharp after our money, as there had been some mysterious robberies on board, the thief having hitherto escaped detection.

Mr. Green and I did not see very much of the shore during the time the ship remained at Devonport; we had, however, a couple of afternoons, which we devoted to visiting Ivybridge, a dozen miles out of Plymouth, for the sake of the lovely scenery, returning in time for a comfortable dinner at the Royal Hotel. Mr. Green's thrifty mood had again asserted itself, and he kept his gold intact.

Just before we sailed, the unknown thief repeated his exploit, and I was the victim. I had about £4, and some odd silver, which had survived my friend's light-hearted exactions, in my chest; and one fine morning, upon opening

the lock-up "till" in the centre, I discovered that cash, purse, and all had disappeared.

I reported the circumstance to Harland immediately, and there was a fine hubbub over it. The captain was furious. All the officers' servants were compelled to submit their kits and persons to a searching examination, the cockpit and the gun-room were turned upside down and inside out—all to no purpose. My servant, a bandsman, was regarded with suspicion, upon no more substantial ground than the fact that he was my servant; but neither he nor any one else could be fixed with the theft.

Mr. Green was exceedingly indignant and sympathetic over my loss.

"Tell you what it is, old man," he said, as we undressed that night at our chests, which stood side by side, "these outfitters ought to be made to put decent locks on the private tills—any sort of key would open them. I'll bet you my key'll open yours."

I was too much dejected over my misfortune to take very much interest in his remarks, but I permitted him to test his opinion.

"There you are!" he said, as he unlocked and raised the lid; "some blackguard of a servant has got hold of one of these keys, and we're all at his mercy. It's disgraceful!"

I quite agreed with him; but no remedy appeared to be forthcoming at the moment, and the next day we went to sea, bound for Halifax, Nova Scotia.

What with calling at Gibraltar to tranship some men, and other delays, it was well into July before we found ourselves nearing our port. We made a sailing passage, for the ship was, of course, heavily masted, and coal was to be saved as far as possible. There was plenty of sail-drill and gun-drill at sea, and I was placed, to my delight, midshipman of the mizen-top, where, after I had got over the inevitable internal disturbances induced by the increased motion aloft, I thoroughly enjoyed myself, holding out my hand and crying in my shrill, immature voice, "All ready the mizen, sir!"

conscious that my senior in the main-top was being slanged by the commander for being behindhand: "There you are, Mr. Lumsden! Beaten again by the lammies!"*

Lumsden, a sleepy fellow of nineteen, who imbibed a good deal too freely, was furious upon these occasions, and would threaten me with a good "lambasting" if I dared report again before he did; but he was too lazy and good-natured to do it.

One Sunday morning, when we were hourly expecting to sight the coast outside Halifax, I turned out at four o'clock for my watch on deck, to the realisation of fresh disaster. I had received at Gibraltar a remittance from home, to replace what I had lost; and, mistrusting my private till, had kept my money constantly in my trousers pocket, rolling up the garment when I turned in and placing it under my pillow. When I alighted on the deck, I saw, in the dim light, that my trousers had preceded me, and were lying at my feet; and a moment's investigation revealed the fact that the pocket had been rifled!

This was too much—the tears started to my eyes with vexation, as I hastily opened my chest to see if, by inadvertence, I had left my purse there. No—I knew that I had not. I called the sentry—had he seen any one prowling about my hammock? The trusty marine was offended at the implied neglect of duty on his part. "Not likely, sir, as I would allow any chap to be loafing about the officers' hammicks—I knows my dooty and my orders too well for that."

Of course, it was extremely improbable. My purse had flown, nevertheless, and while I groped about between the chests, in the hope forlorn that it might have escaped accidentally from its secure retreat, the senior midshipman of the middle watch came rattling down the ladder to see why I had not gone on deck. It was the commander's order that, there

* "Lamb," or more commonly "lammies," was the name bestowed in those days, for some reason, upon the mizentopmen—a sort of half-affectionate, half-contemptuous *sobriquet*.—ED.

being two or three midshipmen in each watch, all were to remain on deck until all the others came up to relieve them; so this gentleman was waiting on deck for my appearance. He was the same who had so brutally struck Mr. Green—a powerful, domineering fellow, who took advantage of his muscle.

"Now then, young Keen," he said, "I should like to know why you are skulking down here? Do you think I'm going to keep half the morning watch for your convenience? Eh?" (I omit the forcible and disgusting embellishments of language, which he and the other oldsters habitually employed.)

"I'm very sorry—I've lost my purse——"

"Confound your purse! Serve you jolly well right, if you can't look after it. Get on your rags, and scoot on deck double quick, or I'll unship your blessed head for you!" (Language as before.)

I got into my clothes in trembling haste, under the threatening eye of the bully, who stood over me; and as I went towards the ladder, he followed me up, and suddenly administered a tremendous kick behind, of such violence that I gasped under it, and hobbled up the ladder sobbing with pain and futile rage.

"Run, you skulking young hound!" he said, as he kicked me; and I ran as well as I could.

When my loss was reported, the whole ship was in a commotion. It had been suspected, while she was in the dockyard, that the depredator might be some one of the dockyard hands who were constantly on board, and some of whom had been busy at some final work the day before we sailed from Plymouth Sound. This incident plainly proved, however, that the thief was among the ship's company; and there was a universal determination to unearth him.

There was no Sunday routine that day—550 officers and men were engaged the whole morning in rummaging the ship. Every man's kit was turned out, every pigeon-hole

and cranny searched, with the consciousness all the while that the thief must be one of the searchers. "Hiders are finders"; but this one was not likely to afford an open demonstration of the saying!

Failing a proper purse, I had obtained a little canvas bag from the paymaster as a substitute; and the only "find" that morning was this small article, thrust—empty, of course—under a gun-carriage on the maindeck, opposite the ladder leading down to the gun-room—that is, on the "half-deck," frequented only by the officers as a rule—and the finder was the sympathetic and energetic Mr. Green—energetic for once in a way, in his indignation over my misfortune.

Meanwhile the ship, under canvas, was running at some six or seven knots for Halifax, the navigator in charge.

Now, the coast of Nova Scotia is liable in July to be visited by dense banks of fog, so sharply defined that you may be one moment in brilliant sunshine and the next enveloped in a thick, damp cloud, not able to see a ship's length; and into one of these ran the *Reliable*, land not having then been sighted.

The navigator, however, was confident as to his position, and the captain was anxious to indulge in a bit of "swagger," by running into Halifax harbour and picking up his berth under canvas; so the screw was still hoisted up, and the ship ran on, with the leadsmen in the chains and a group of alert seamen on the lookout forward.

How these things came about I need not pause to conjecture, but when the ship ran out of the fog bank, about eleven o'clock, as quickly as she had run into it, there was a sudden and terrifying cry from forward:

"Breakers ahead, sir! Breakers on both bows!"

There, sure enough, in the most unpleasant proximity, was a rocky coast, the white spray gleaming in the sunlight as it leaped up the face of the cliffs—and the *Reliable* was heading dead for it.

The officer of the watch was on the spot:

"Hard down with the helm! Clear lower deck! Hands

S. S.

shorten and trim sail! Clear away both anchors! What water have you got in the chains?"

"Eleven fathoms, sir."

Then there was a terrific scrimmage. The ship having been such a short time in commission, the men were not "in hand" to the same extent as they would have been after working longer together. The captain and commander were, of course, on deck in a moment, and the latter gave the customary orders for trimming the sails and taking some off her, as the men came tumbling up, helter-skelter, from below; but many of them were gazing ahead instead of going quietly to their stations. The sails were already shaking and flapping as the ship flew round under her helm, bringing the glittering breakers and black, cruel rocks under her lee.

The maindeck, upon which the cables are worked, was encumbered fore and aft with the seamen's bags and all kinds of gear pulled out of its usual place in the heat of the search; the cables actually buried in some places.

The yards were braced up, after more delay than was creditable, for there was something of a panic among the men; but the ship, coming rapidly round in obedience to the helm, had shot too far up into the wind, and the sails were nearly a-back. She had now lost her way completely, and lay for the moment "in irons," as seamen term it—a very serious business under the circumstances, for she was drifting helplessly towards the breakers. The commander tried to get her head off the wind.

"Flatten in the head-sheets forward!" (which means, haul over the jib and staysail to windward).

Then, for the first time, the captain raised his voice. He was a very silent, austere man, with an iron sort of face and a very strong, deep voice—very autocratic to the commander and his immediate subordinates, but wonderfully kind to the youngsters.

"That's no use, Hampson," he said; then raised his voice, "Let go the starboard anchor! She'd never tack clear, you know, if you got her full," he added to the commander.

The second lieutenant, who was in charge of the cables below, was luckily a man of some sense and presence of mind, and had got some men down there to attend to the "compressors" which control the cable. He was now making them throw all the loose gear off the great chains, but the task was not completed when he heard the captain's order.

"Man the compressor! Stand clear there!" he shouted—and none too soon. The old boatswain, on the forecastle, had his men by the anchors, and was not troubling himself about the condition of the maindeck. When the captain says "Let go," the anchor has to go—and go it did, in about two seconds.

There had been more zeal than discretion in the frantic search for my lost money, or rather for evidence against the thief, and some of the men had taken down some heavy blocks, etc., kept there for dismounting the guns. One of these, with a huge rope attached, one end of which remained overhead, was caught by the heavy cable as it rumbled out, throwing everything off it like a great impatient snake. Down came the big rope, with a great iron shackle at the end, the latter falling full on the head of the unlucky Green, as he hurried along with a message from the commander; and down went Mr. Green, senseless and bleeding, his message undelivered.

Now, the message was to the second lieutenant, directing him to "bouse to"—*i.e.* check the cable—when a certain amount had run out. Receiving no instructions, this officer was permitting the cable to run out, listening intently for the pipe of the boatswain's mate down the hatchway to "bouse to."

Meanwhile the sails had partially filled again, and the ship was gathering some way and taking the cable out roundly. It was a pretty awkward situation, and a great deal of mischief may happen in a few seconds under such circumstances.

"Bouse to below!" roared the captain. "Shorten and furl sails!"

The boatswain's mate whistled furiously, with an instant

response, the ship jumping and trembling fore and aft as the cable, checked in its career, dragged and jerked at the compressor, until it was finally stopped, and the ship slowly swung round to her anchor, while the hands on deck, pushed about and bawled at by a dozen officers, manned the ropes and clewed up the great sails.

"What water is there under the stern?" asked the captain, as the ship stretched out the cable, the breakers looking perilously near.

"Five fathoms, sir," was the response in a minute or two—thirty feet—and the *Reliable* drew six-and-twenty feet aft! Moreover, there was a bit of a swell on, and the ship was pitching to it.

I was in the mizen-top by this time, and had a very fine view of the rocks and breakers over the stern; and I can assure you they looked very unpleasantly close. Fortunately there was not much wind, and there was little fear that the anchor would not hold the ship.

The remainder of that day was spent in shortening in the cable, getting the screw down, raising steam, and finally weighing anchor; and towards evening we steamed into Halifax, after about as close a shave as any one would wish to have.

My friend Mr. Green also had a close shave of "losing the number of his mess." It was not considered safe to send him on shore to hospital, so he lay in a bunk in the captain's side cabin, senseless for many hours, and then babbling in delirium. As he kept on repeating my name, it was considered that my presence would have a soothing effect. He did not know me, however; but as I sat beside him, feeling very sorry for him, he let out some secrets.

When he recovered, I did not know what to do; I felt that I could not take advantage of his unconscious revelations. It may seem absurd, but just put yourself in my place. I had, in a very full measure, that strong boyish sense of honour in such matters, which is as indiscriminating as it is admirable, and it seemed to me impossible to disregard it.

Mr. Green, apparently quite oblivious of the purport of his delirious utterances, was even more friendly than before; but I gave him such a dose of cold shoulder, that my desire to remain upon more or less distant terms in future could not fail to be understood—and this, no doubt, set him thinking.

There was more thieving. McLean, a dandified senior midshipman, who used to obtain rings and pins "on tick" from confiding Jews (and, I fear, sometimes obtained cash from "Moses" for articles thus obtained from "Samuels"!), missed a ring of some value from his chest, and an assistant-surgeon, whose cabin was close to the gun-room, was also a victim. It was maddening! What was to be done?

Harland spoke up in the mess:

"I say, you fellows, just listen to me a moment. It's time something new was done about this business. I propose that we all consent to have our chests searched. The commander must be told first what we are going to do, and he can send anybody he likes to look on. Nothing may come of it, but at any rate it will be some sort of satisfaction."

The idea was agreed to, and Harland went to interview the commander, having previously arranged with the other sublieutenants that they should quietly keep an eye upon the chests meanwhile, and prevent access to them; it was a strong measure, and probably illegal, but justifiable under the circumstances—and the gun-room officers suddenly found themselves in the curious position of regarding each his neighbour as a possible thief! That was what it amounted to; and you may imagine that, in my case, suspicion assumed a pretty definite form.

I had had the morning watch that day, from four o'clock to half-past eight, and Mr. Green was in the next watch, relieving me at the latter hour. I had come down at seven o'clock for a brief toilet, and he, of course, had dressed afterwards, in time for eight o'clock breakfast.

The commander assented at once to Harland's proposition,

and ordered the master at arms—the chief of the ship's police—to attend the investigation.

Among the first chests to be searched was mine. I threw up the lid with great readiness, and unlocked my private till—and there, lying exposed upon some neckties and other small gear, was McLean's ring and a pin belonging to the assistant-surgeon!

There was quite a little crowd of us standing round, the two victims naturally being in the forefront to identify their property—which they very promptly did.

There was a dead silence for a moment or two—I felt my heart come up in my throat, and could not have uttered a word for the life of me.

"Well, youngster," said Harland at length, "what have you got to say to this?"

"I—I never took them—I know nothing about it," I stammered, gulping down a sob.

"Well, you must explain yourself to the captain," said Harland, not unkindly, and I could see by his eye that he was more than half disposed to believe me.

A sort of court-martial was held immediately in the captain's large cabin; and there, in reply to his question, I repeated my denial; but I could not bring myself to reveal the incident of Mr. Green's delirious talk. That gentleman was on duty on the quarter-deck, and I had not seen or spoken with him since he relieved me at half-past eight. I now realised that this was his revenge for my repudiation of his friendly advances; but how could I prove it?

"Well, Mr. Keen," said the captain, "these things have been discovered in your possession. It's all very well for you to say that you know nothing about them—how did they come there?"

"I don't know, sir," I said, plucking up my courage; "but I have been robbed twice myself. If he—if anybody can open chests and steal things, he could open mine and put these in there."

It was a good point, and I could see that it told. I was in favour with the captain, and had in fact dined with him on shore on the previous evening, after a pleasant drive into the country. Still, there was a deadlock.

"Do you suspect any one?" asked the commander.

How could I say I suspected Mr. Green? My sense of honour stuck in my throat. Besides, it would seem rather odd, after some weeks had elapsed, to spin this yarn about Mr. Green's ravings now that I was in a hole.

I was silent, and by the captain's order I was placed under the charge of a special sentry, inside a canvas screen on the maindeck, pending the report of the proceedings to the admiral, who was then at Halifax. It was a heart-breaking situation for an innocent lad. I foresaw all the disgrace of a court-martial, expulsion from the service, and possible imprisonment.

Mr. Green on the following day, when no one was about, and the sentry was at the other end of his monotonous promenade, peeped round the screen.

"Hallo, old man," he said; "I'm sorry you're in such a mess——"

This was too much. I seized an implement from a neighbouring gun, and flung it at him with all my force. I said something, but I really do not know what it was—not complimentary, at all events—and then I was reported to the sergeant of the guard! I was in a mess, and no mistake.

And then, in a few hours, the whole thing was cleared up.

Smith, the gun-room steward, a very smart little cockney, missed some money from a lock-up drawer in his berth, and he had taken the precaution of marking it. As I was under the sentry's charge, it was obvious that the thief must be looked for elsewhere, and Harland, at Smith's suggestion, adopted a drastic method of investigation. The fact that the stolen articles had been found in my chest had produced a very uneasy feeling in the mess. Most of the fellows were disposed to believe in my innocence; but the circumstances

pointed to the probability of the thief being one of our number.

At tea-time, when they were all seated round the table, Harland got up, and said :

"More robbery ; it can't be Keen this time. I want all you fellows to empty your pockets in turn, and let the steward inspect your money. It can't do any harm, and we'll begin with the junior and work up. Now, Green, you're 'boots' ——"

Mr. Green's complexion, I am told, exhibited a hue very much in accordance with his name ; but he tried to stick out.

"I don't see why you should look at my money," he said ; but the sense of the mess was immediately against him.

"You'll turn it out because I tell you to," said Harland ; "and you'd better be quick about it, or we'll very soon do it for you."

No further search was needed. Harland, privately informed as to the nature of the marks, immediately recognised the coins, which the steward declared he was quite prepared to swear to.

Well, Mr. Green gave no further trouble. He confessed to the whole of the robberies ; and I, my tongue being loosed, poured out the talé of my experiences—his little tricks to make me pay on shore, his sharpness at billiards, his revelations in delirium, and all the rest of it—before the captain ; and I felt that there was too much truth in his remark, after my friend had taken my place within the screen.

"Well, Mr. Keen," he said, taking my arm kindly, with a humorous twinkle in his eye, "I think you and Mr. Green had better exchange surnames !"

H.M.S. "CALLIOPE" AT APIA

THIS is not a story of the old sailing-ship days, but of the remarkable escape of a man-of-war of modern construction, about twenty-one years ago.

The *Calliope* was a third-class cruiser of that time, a vessel of 2,770 tons, well-masted, so as to be able to sail if necessary, and with considerable speed—some fifteen knots—under steam. Such vessels were used for long cruises, as in a training squadron, or on stations such as Australia or the Pacific, where sails sometimes came in handy.

In the year 1889 the *Calliope* was on the Australian station, in which are included that multitude of islands, which you will find on the atlas, to the eastward and northward of Australia, under the inclusive name of Polynesia. Among these, somewhere about the centre of the southern portion, is a group of three, known as the Samoa, or Navigator Islands; and upon Apolu, the centre island, is the town and harbour of Apia.

At that time there was a good deal of international political business going on about the Samoa Islands, with which we need not concern ourselves just now, except in so far that it gave occasion for quite a little squadron of men-of-war to be lying at Apia in March 1889—American, German, Russian, and English—the *Calliope* being, however, the only British vessel present, commanded by Captain Henry Coey Kane. These ships comprised the *Trenton* (American), *Adler* and *Eber* (German), *Olga* and *Nipsic* (Russian); the *Trenton* being by far the largest vessel there; and there were many merchant vessels and local trading schooners as well.

Apia, on the north side of the island, is a small harbour,

and is indeed smaller than it looks, being surrounded by coral reefs below water ; so that the vessels lying there are at pretty close quarters. It is snug enough, except in northerly gales, which blow right in with a heavy sea ; and then there is danger of a ship dragging her anchor and going on the reef, so the captains were always on the lookout for gales from this quarter, sending down their topmasts and lower yards, and getting up steam so as to be prepared for emergencies.

A gale of this kind blew on the 7th and 8th March, but no damage was done to speak of, and the ships all rode it out in safety. March is, however, an anxious month here—though February is certainly more so—as the tremendous cyclones of the South Pacific are then prevalent ; storms of the same nature as that West Indian one in which poor Captain Bob Gilroy came to grief ; and so Captain Kane and all the other seamen kept a pretty sharp eye upon the barometer, which invariably gives notice of the approach of one of these unwelcome visitants.

On the 15th March there was a decided fall of the barometer, with heavy rain ; all the men-of-war struck their masts and yards and got up steam, the captains being determined not to be caught napping. Their friends on shore, however, old residents in the island, told them that these precautions were not necessary, that the barometer had fallen merely for the rain, and they might hoist their topmasts up again ; and certainly the captains were not very much afraid, having held on safely in some pretty stiff gales ; but they kept their masts and yards down.

It was well they did so. As the day wore on it began to blow from north-east, almost dead into the harbour, the force of the wind steadily increasing in a way that evidently meant mischief. By midnight it was blowing what seamen ordinarily term a gale—quite hard enough ; but it continued to increase with the advance of the small hours of the morning, and it became quite evident that they were in for something exceptional : in fact, a cyclone.

Daylight revealed a terrific scene—tremendous seas were

rolling into the harbour and thundering on the reefs. All the shipping was dragging, vessels fouling each other, some already sunk or driven on shore; among these was the small German man-of-war, *Eber*, which sank at her anchors, all but five hands being lost.

The *Calliope* was found to have dragged her anchors considerably, and was unpleasantly close to the reef. Steam was got up to full speed, and Captain Kane, constantly on the alert with helm and steam, contrived for some time to keep his ship clear of the reef, but he soon realised that this could not last long. He says, in his report:

"The seas were perfectly fearful, breaking over our top-gallant forecastle, and all but burying the poor *Adler*, which soon went on the reef. By very good management, they slipped their cables at the right moment and were lifted right on to the reef, where she lay on her broadside. Had they not slipped the cables she would have gone down in deep water. Twenty men were drowned in her; the remainder found shelter in the ship until the following morning."

So here was another German vessel destroyed before their eyes. The wind was still increasing, and so heavy was the sea that it was actually breaking a good deal short of the reefs.

"The *Vandalia* was dragging down upon us, the *Olga* was close on our starboard quarter, and the shore reef close on the port quarter. I managed for some time to keep clear of all three, but our port cable parted and we came against the *Vandalia's* stern and carried away the jib-boom and all the fastenings of the bowsprit. The spar itself was saved by lifting right up when the bobstay, bands, etc., went.* Then the *Olga* came up on our starboard side, and very nearly rammed us. I just managed to sheer clear, but she caught

* The bowsprit is, of course, the big spar which is bedded inside the ship; the jib-boom a smaller one, which runs out on the bowsprit, passing through a cap. The bowsprit is supported by strong wire rope or chain "bobstays" downwards, besides iron bands, which pass through the ship's timbers, and are screwed up tight.

our foreyard and damaged it severely. Luckily it boomed her off."

Evidently things could not go on like this much longer. Even had the *Calliope* been alone, it was only a matter of time when she would drive on shore. Still the wind increased, and the other vessels, dragging at their cables and sheering helplessly about, the great seas going clean over them, doomed as they were to perish, seemed likely to maim or sink the British vessel first. Captain Kane began to look out for a "soft place" to run his ship aground. There were some stretches of sandy beach about—better to choose your own spot, if you must go, than have the ship smashed up in a moment on the coral rock.

But the notion went very much against the grain, though his ship was now riding only by one cable, and getting closer to the reef at every sea. He had slipped the other cable, finding that it only hampered him in trying to avoid the other vessels, and did not take its share of strain. But *must* he lose his ship? Was there no way out of it? There was the American ship, the *Trenton*, still maintaining her ground pretty well in the middle of the entrance, but no one imagined that she would be able to hold on long.

Kane made up his mind to adopt a "neck or nothing" plan. His ship was a good steamer, he knew that the chief engineer was a good man; he would endeavour to steam right out against the wind. If he failed, there was still that sandy spot in view.

I dare say many of his officers thought it was a vain attempt. It did not seem as though a vessel such as the *Calliope* could stem that resistless wind, which drove the rain and spray horizontally with such force that they could not face it without putting up their hands as some protection; which blew men down, or sent them staggering along the deck; and those tremendous seas, rolling in with overpowering weight, their crests torn off by the raging wind before they were well formed—steep, curling seas, that broke in tons upon the deck.

The captain was going to try it, anyhow, and leave that sandy spot for the *Olga*—she actually did go aground there, too—and he sent for the chief engineer.

"We want every pound of steam you can give us; I'm going to take her out if I can."

The chief didn't say much, but he went below to rally up his men; while the captain gave orders to stand by to slip the cable.

Everybody realised that it was a desperate venture. They had seen the other vessels come to grief—one sunk at her anchors, the other dashed upon the rocks as the only escape from a similar fate. Many lives had been lost under their very eyes, and they well knew that their own were in peril. Anything may happen in such a tempest as this, and the best laid plans may come utterly to grief.

Well, the die is cast; the captain signals to slip the cable, and in a minute the big chain flies out; the engines are put at full speed, and four of the most careful and skilful men in the ship are placed at the helm. So much depends upon the precise handling of the rudder—one mistake, and the ship may fall off with her broadside to the wind and sea, and then, in those narrow waters, they would never get her stem on again.

The question is, will she steer? Will she go ahead at all? An anxious minute or two after the cable is slipped—the engines are throbbing at their best speed, and "racing" sometimes as the screw comes out of the water with the violent pitching.

The captain and navigator, clinging on with their heads over the bulwarks, have got "marks" on shore—some distinct objects in line, which will show in a moment whether she gains or loses.

Ahead! she certainly goes ahead! Very slowly, but undoubtedly, she is gaining ground towards the entrance; the helmsmen are tense with concentration on their all-important job: she keeps straight still; she gathers a little more way.

But the harbour narrows further out—it is only about

five hundred yards in breadth, lined on either side with sharp coral rocks—if they lose command of her there for a moment, it is all up; and there, right in their course, lies the American ship, every man on board, forgetful for the moment of their own peril, intently watching the British ship.

Slowly she creeps up; and now the racing seas assault her with increased violence, as though enraged at the prospect of her escape. The hatches are all well secured, and the men hold on tight to ropes and belaying pins and what not; great green masses of water sweep over the forecastle, and come leaping and pouring aft. "It would have sunk many a ship," says Captain Kane, with some natural pride in his own craft.

And now they are getting close up to the American: it is a ticklish moment, for the course *must* be slightly altered to clear her. You may steam out against a hurricane, but you can't steam right through a big ship.

Very carefully and "gingerly," as Jack would say, the ship is edged over, so as to pass, slanting across, close under the *Trenton's* stern. Captain Kane "cons" his ship himself, his eye measuring the distance as she creeps up; he is not going to lose any more ground than he can help, or risk running her broad off the wind. Closer and closer—surely she must touch!

No; but so close does she creep past, that the foreyard projects over the American's boat, hanging at the davits—almost over her deck, in fact.

Now, will she come up to the wind again? The fierce blast strikes her bow with terrific force, the seas come thundering in—it is blowing harder than ever—but the *Calliope* comes up smiling—straightens herself once more for the harbour's mouth, and, as she crawls slowly by, almost within jumping distance of the American, buried in the seas, pitching furiously, but held straight by the iron nerve of her skipper, controlling the strong and willing hands at the wheel, the Yankees break into a spontaneous, hearty cheer

of admiration, of generous appreciation of a fine piece of seamanship. Our men return it, even above the awful scream of the hurricane; and you don't know what that means, until you have been in the thick of a cyclone. The cheers ring out clear and distinct, and our men begin to feel considerable pride in their captain, who takes things so quietly, but knows just exactly what to do, and how to do it.

Steadily she draws out towards the open sea, the danger by no means over yet. All depends upon the steam. Should that fail, utter, helpless destruction awaits them—death to many, beyond all doubt.

Down in the engine-room and stokehold the chief and all his staff are hard at it, watching every valve, every part of the complicated machinery; easing her as the stern flies up, and the screw threatens to "race" dangerously; keeping the fires perfect, glowing, by the most skilful and constant attention; watching the steam gauge. Is she losing steam? "Stoke up! Keep those fires clear!"

From 9.30 a.m. to 8 p.m. that day the constant pressure was maintained. Not for a moment dared they ease down, for fear of losing command of the ship; nor did they know how much offing they had made. You cannot see far in a cyclone; the air is too thick with salt and fresh water. As Captain Kane says in his report: "It being as thick as pea-soup, I could not tell if I was ten miles or ten yards off the reef which skirts the whole shore."

After eight o'clock the worst was over, and by noon of the following day the cyclone had "blown itself down to an ordinary gale"; in other words, had passed onwards. It must have been an unusually slow-moving storm.

On the 19th the *Calliope* returned to Apia, to find the harbour swept clear. Not a vessel had escaped, from the *Trenton* down to the smallest schooner. Among the men-of-war alone, one hundred and thirty lives had been lost, and a far greater number than this altogether.

"The *Calliope*, thank God, is left afloat," says Captain Kane in his report, "and sound in hull, though with loss of three

anchors, three boats, foreyard sprung, and all fastenings of bowsprit carried away. We lost no lives, and had only one serious accident, to a carpenter's mate, who has a fractured skull ; but he is doing well."

Captain Kane speaks in most enthusiastic terms of the behaviour of all his subordinates, from the highest to the lowest.

"During the hours we passed, when every moment might have been our last, every order was obeyed with alacrity and without confusion ; and the way in which the engineer officers and stokers kept to their work is beyond all praise."

Well, they had a good example before them in their captain ; and every one, sailor and landsman, expert and layman, agreed that he displayed very fine courage and excellent seamanship and judgment—don't forget the judgment. He seemed to know to a hair what his ship would do, and judged exactly right.

Captain Kane's despatches, and a very warm letter of commendation from the Admiralty, were laid on the table of the House of Commons ; and the saving of the *Calliope* will always be remembered as an incident of which British seamen may be proud.

THE CAPSIZING OF THE "ADAMANT"

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

I WAS vegetating for a few weeks in the summer, a year or two ago, at a little place in Cornwall—just a cove, with a sandy beach and towering cliffs at the back of it, and a few cottages, in which you could get very decent lodgings, if you didn't insist upon a "bathroom hot and cold," and other products of civilisation. I never go to these places during August. Being an elderly bachelor, and entirely master of my time since I retired from the navy, I usually take my holiday in June or July, when the days are at their longest; and I take some paper and pens with me, so that I can get on with any little literary job I may have in hand.

On this occasion I encountered, after I had been established a few days in my rooms, a stalwart, well-preserved man of—well, I should have said of about sixty or so; but as I am now in his confidence on the subject, I may as well state at once that he was nearer eighty than seventy: and this in spite of a sea-faring life, with more hardships at its commencement than usually fall to the lot even of merchant seamen. He was a marvel for his age, and must have been a fellow of tremendous physique and vitality in his youth. He used to go for a long swim every morning; I could see his grey head bobbing on the smooth sea a mile or so out.

We naturally chummed up, and compared our sea-faring experiences over our pipes on the beach; and one afternoon, as we sat on the warm sand, with our backs against an old piece of a boat, we got talking about the various types

of ships in the navy, and the development of the ironclad ; and I found my friend exceedingly well up in the subject.

"Yes," he said, "I have had several very good chums among naval men, and none better than poor Jimmy Cardwell——"

"Cardwell? The captain of the *Adamant*?"

"The same, and, in a manner, the inventor of her. She cost him his life, poor chap, and very nearly cost me mine too."

I turned and regarded him with new interest.

"Oh, so you were, of course. I remember now the name of the captain's guest who steered the boat afterwards was Scanlan. So you were on board at the time?"

"I was there as Jimmy's guest——"

"Would you mind spinning me the yarn about it? I was in China at the time, and I well recollect the first news we had—'*Adamant* capsize.' That was all; and we were disposed to ridicule the idea of a five-thousand-ton ship capsizing like a jolly-boat."

"Yes—I don't wonder at it—but if you'd seen her! Well, I was at school with Cardwell, and then we parted; he for the Royal Navy, I for a run-away to sea, against my father's wish; but I commanded a ship before Jimmy did, after all. When he commissioned the *Adamant*, knowing that I was having a spell on shore, he invited me to come for a cruise with the squadron, and I arrived at Portsmouth one afternoon in October—thirty-five years ago nearly—and found the craft in the basin, ready for sea. Jimmy, as I dare say you know, was the father of that class of ship, and had been bullying the Admiralty for years to build one. When at last they consented to have a vessel designed something like what he suggested, they paid him the compliment of putting him in command.

"He met me at the gangway with his jolly smile—delightful chap he was to look at, and every bit as good inside—and took me over the ship, in which I was very much interested, for she was quite a new type—revolving turrets, 25-ton guns

in 'em; bulwarks on hinges to let down all round—a very formidable fighting machine beyond all doubt.

"‘Well, Jimmy,’ I said, as we stood on the quarter-deck later on, ‘there’s only one improvement I should make in your craft——’

"‘What’s that?’

"‘I should throw all these big spars overboard, and have three good pole masts, with a large fore-and-aft sail on each—she’s not safe like this, in my opinion.’

"Jimmy laughed:

"‘Why, you should have seen her on the trial cruise. We had her under sail for a week; on a wind, running, reaching, every way you can think of. She stood up like a wall in a stiffish breeze, and ran nearly thirteen knots with topmast-studdingsail set——’

"‘Oh, a haystack ’ll run,’ I said, ‘but I should doubt her stiffness. However, we’ll see.’

"And we did see. We went to sea about the middle of October—ten ships in company; ironclads of several different classes, all heavily masted, a brand-new, fast-steaming frigate, and one of the old sort as well, with a slim bit of a despatch-boat to run messages. It was the usual kind of cruise, Jimmy said—Vigo, and then Lisbon, Gibraltar, back to Vigo again—and so on. I was very comfortable on board, and got on capitally with all the officers, not excepting the midshipmen, who would invite me down to the gun-room, and try to make me drunk. Fancy a midshipman making me drunk!

"Well, one fine morning, off the coast of Spain, the admiral signalled to the squadron to try rate of sailing. They were to run to leeward for about twenty miles, round the despatch-boat, the *Venus*, then beat to windward again. I needn’t tell you the old-style frigate beat us all handsomely. In beating back, the wind freshened a bit, and I watched our craft with some curiosity. She was not good to windward—sluggish, and made a lot of lee-way—and there was something about the feel of her that I didn’t half like. She’d heel over six or seven degrees, and seemed quite happy, then suddenly

she'd go two or three degrees more, and bring the water nearly flush with her deck, for she was mighty low in the water, you know; and you'd feel as if she might go a lot further any moment.

"In the afternoon, after the race was over, the wind was pretty fresh from the westward, but that didn't prevent the Admiral from coming on board to pay us a promised visit; and by the time his boat was hauled up alongside for him to get into her, the sea had got up a bit, and was washing over our deck pretty frequently, and pouring over on the lee side, so that the Admiral had to be pretty slippery in getting into his boat, or she might have been swamped alongside.

"Jimmy kept urging him to stay and dine, that he might see for himself what a comfortable craft she was in a breeze. 'No, thank you, Captain Cardwell,' said the admiral, 'I'm sure I should be most excellently entertained, but I think I must go on board again.' He said afterwards to his flag captain, who met him at the gangway: 'Thank God, I'm aboard my own ship again!' It has always struck me as very odd that, after making that remark, he didn't signal some special instructions to Jimmy to take in his square sails—the weather was looking very dirty, and the glass dropping; however, he didn't, and the order was to keep station under sail, and only use steam when necessary.

"I went down to the gun-room that evening, as Jimmy was constantly on the bridge, and I made it a rule never to go yarning with him up there; and we had a rare time—what they called a 'corrobboree,' which means plenty of singing, mostly of a noisy and inferior kind, and the spinning of yarns in between. Of course, I took my turn at both; and as they didn't know any of my shanties it went down very well. By the time the master-at-arms came to tell us it was 'out lights,' some of the seniors had had about as much liquor as they could carry, and perhaps just a trifle more. The midshipman of the first watch—a dandy little chap, who always looked well dressed, even in his oilskins, with the handsomest blue

eyes you ever saw—had been down for a sardine supper about nine o'clock, and reported a dirty night with squalls of rain; so I put on my waterproof and went on deck.

"It was as dark as a wolf's mouth, and it was some time before I got my eyes adjusted a bit. Then I saw that the ship was on the port tack, under double-reefed topsails, foresail, and foretopmast staysail; the maintrysail was set, too, but the mainsail was furled. The wind was about abeam, and she was going along six or seven knots. The engines were stopped; but they were used every now and then to keep station with the flagship, which was next ahead of us. Astern, another ironclad loomed up, uncomfortably close, in the darkness; and away to port were the lights of the other division, five ships in line. The wind was then sou'-west, so the course must have been about nor'-west. I saw it was going to be a dirty night, and even then the wind was increasing. The *Adamant* was heeling more than she should have done, and every now and then I had that curious feeling that she was on the point of going over further; I would instinctively put out my hand, feeling for something to get hold of, in case—and I'm not exactly a nervous individual.

"About eleven o'clock the wind freshened a good bit, and the admiral began blinking at us with his flashing light. I heard afterwards that the signal was 'open order,' meaning that the ships were to increase their distance apart. Jimmy ordered another reef to be taken in the topsails, which was done, very smartly, by the watch on deck, and the foresail was hauled up, leaving her under treble-reefed topsails, topmast staysail, and maintrysail—no, that was taken in, too.

"I had intended remaining on deck just for a quarter of an hour or so, to blow the 'fug,' as the mids called it, of the berth out of me, but somehow I couldn't make up my mind to go below. I remained abaft, on the weather side of the bridge, watching the ship as though I were in charge. The wind drew ahead as it freshened, and the yards were braced up, the ship dragging along sluggishly under the scanty canvas, and dropping to leeward of the flagship. I saw then, what had

not struck me before ; that the tripod masts enabled the yards to be braced up much sharper than the ordinary rigging would. You know she had a great sort of iron strut each side, instead of shrouds, to give more play for her guns in action. The officer of the watch kept pulling on the lee braces as the wind drew ahead, until he got the lower yards pretty nearly fore and aft, and the topsail yards not much farther in.

"There I stuck, on the after bridge, the officer in charge and Cardwell being forward, at the other end of the top deck, which ran fore and aft over the turrets, until it struck eight bells, and the boatswain's mate called the other watch. The officer of the middle watch came up smartly to relieve his man, and three minutes later the pipe went, 'Watch to muster.'

"I have often noticed, as I daresay you have, that, if the weather's going to play you some dirty trick, it selects the moment when the watch is being changed. It was so on this occasion. The midshipman of the watch hadn't got through twenty names, when the wind suddenly drew ahead to nor'west, in a violent squall, with pelting rain. The topsails thundered a warning, and the mustering of the watch was abruptly terminated ; it was the last time most of 'em were to hear their names called !

"'Hard up with the helm ! Flatten in the staysail sheet ! Get along the port-head braces !' sings out the lieutenant. I saw that the flagship was winking at us again, and I heard at the court-martial that it was 'Wear ship,' but I doubt whether any one took it in aboard the *Adamant*. The ship hung up in the wind, and why, in the name of steam, that lieutenant, or Jimmy Cardwell, didn't give her a turn of the screw to get her off, I've never been able to understand. No, they must stick to the old-style seamanship, and box her off. They braced round the head-yards, and of course she blew off fast enough then, and it was 'Lee head braces !' in a hurry.

"They barely had time to brace round again, when the wind came down in a fresh squall, the ship lying with little or no

way on her, nearly broadside on, with her yards braced up pretty well fore and aft. I felt her going; I heard Jimmy shout to let go the lee topsail sheets and halyards, man the weather braces, and so on; but no one had time to do anything. I saw her spars sweep across the sky; I heard the water washing up to leeward—up to the turrets, into the turrets. I could hear cries of dismay from men who were thrown across the deck; crashing of loose gear. I didn't know quite what I was going to do, but I thought the end had come for me. As she went over, I climbed down the weather side of the bridge, and in a few moments I was standing on the ship's side; she was on her beam ends, and I was washed off as she turned over completely, bottom up, and in five minutes, I should say, from when the squall struck her, down she went, and down I went with her—down I went, with the terrible cries of those who were entrapped below ringing in my ears, for I could hear them—I could hear them, as she lay on her side, the steam-pipe under water, gurgling and sputtering, the sea pouring down the great gaping funnel, the stokers shrieking below. Then the water closed over me, and I was down, I suppose, for a minute or more. I managed, when I came up, to get my waterproof off me, and kick my shoes off, but I couldn't help thinking it was a pity I was one of the best swimmers afloat, for it would mean a long, ghastly struggle for life, with certain death at the end of it, when something came splashing near me, and I saw it was a big boat, with half a dozen men in her, working furiously to free her of a lot of gear. I yelled at them, and in a minute or two they had pulled me in. It was the launch, the second launch, I think they said, which had floated off the deck as the ship capsized, but she had a canvas cover on, laced down all round, and inside her was another boat, a long galley, and any amount of raffle. We had to rip up the cover,—luckily every man had a knife on him—and heave out the other boat, and a lot of gear, and while we were doing it, we came across another boat, bottom up, with a lot of men clinging to her. They shouted to us, and half a dozen of 'em jumped, and somehow got into

the launch. I heard afterwards that Jimmy Cardwell himself was on that upturned boat; if I had known it at the time, I'd have joined him, and either have saved him or gone down with him. We got the oars out—there were only nine or ten, and she pulled eighteen—but we tried to get back and pick up the other fellows, shouting to them. While we tugged at the oars, a big ship went past within fifty yards, under sail and steam; passed nearly over the spot where the *Adamant* foundered! We shouted, but it was no use, and we could make no way against the sea. A big crest broke on board, and pretty nearly swamped us, and we had to pump and bail for dear life.

"There was an officer in the boat, I found—a boatswain, I think—and sixteen bluejackets. I said: 'We had better put her stern to it, hadn't we?' They didn't know who I was, but they did it; and then I said: 'Look here, I'm Captain Scanlan; I'll put myself under your orders, but I'm an old hand in a boat, and you had better take my advice!'

"Well, we set to work again clearing the boat, for she had all kinds of gear stowed in her; three or four hands pulled at the oars, and I got hold of one oar and rigged it over the stern to steer with. When we had got all the gear out, we pulled eight oars, the men relieving each other, pulling before the wind, which I knew must take us somewhere on the coast of Spain. We had plenty of bailing to do, and if it hadn't been for me, I doubt whether they'd ever have got on shore. They were a fine set of fellows, and they pulled like blazes, but not one of them could steer with an oar in that sea-way. My first craft was a whaler, and I learned then all that any man can know about boating; so I stuck to the steer-oar all night, and on through the next day, when we sighted the coast in the afternoon, and got into Arosa Bay just before dark."

Captain Scanlan paused, and proceeded to fill his pipe.

"An awful story," I said; "and one can't help feeling that it could have been avoided."

"Of course it could," said Scanlan, puffing at his pipe. When it was well alight, he went on: "Jimmy was cracked

about his craft, and she was nearly two feet lower in the water than was intended. I tell you, when I looked at her across the basin, and saw her low hull, and those top-heavy turrets, with twelve inches of armour on them, and those big masts towering over all, I had half a mind to have some pressing business in town. However——"

BEACHED ON ST. PAUL'S ISLAND

CAPTAIN SCANLAN'S OTHER YARN.

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

"I T was only about a year after my narrow shave in the *Adamant*," said Captain Scanlan, a day or two later, "that I had a very rum adventure on the passage to Australia."

We were in my sitting-room, on a wet afternoon, and the atmosphere was decidedly hazy with tobacco smoke. I had intended to devote this wet day to a book which I was writing upon a more or less professional subject ; but, having reached a point at which reference was imperative to a work certainly not to be found in a Cornwall fishing village, I was really not sorry when my old friend presented himself with his pipe. Like most old seamen, he loved spinning a yarn to an informed and appreciative listener ; and he spun a very good yarn, so it was no penance to me in my capacity as audience.

"There was an iron vessel—the *Thessaly*—getting on in years, which had been purchased by a firm in Australia to do duty as a coal hulk, or some such thing, and they wanted a man to sail her out, taking a cargo of sorts : and as I had a daughter married out there, I undertook the job, which was well paid for, as a means of paying my daughter a visit, and at the same time putting a little money in my pocket, for my passage home was included in the bargain.

"The *Thessaly* was originally built for an iron steam frigate, carrying guns on her maindeck——"

"I knew her," I said ; "she was sold out of the service when I was quite a youngster ; but I never heard what became of her."

"You're going to hear now. She was, as you say, sold out of the service after about ten years, being an absolute failure as a frigate, and too poor a steamer for transport work, and her new owners made a sailing ship of her, riveted up her big ports, and gave her heavier spars. She was a suitable craft enough for the purpose, with good beam; but they never got much out of her, and so this was her last venture, before being reduced to a hulk. I shipped a very good crew—the terms were handsome; good wages, and a passage home guaranteed within a certain period—and cleared from the Thames in April. I can't say I fancied my new command very much. She stood up well to her canvas, but you might pile it on and get very little response out of her for your trouble. However, there was no particular hurry, and I had supplied myself with plenty of books and tobacco, so I was happy enough.

"We made a fair passage as far as the Cape—I mean the longitude of the Cape, for of course we didn't touch there—and then I got south to about the forty-fifth parallel,* and we got a roaring breeze astern, that made the old craft go in a way that must have astonished her, with the usual big sea, which, however, brought out her good qualities, for she steered admirably, and was never in danger of broaching to. Well, I was beginning to see the end of the voyage in sight, but one day, when we were in about 60 degrees east longitude, the carpenter came up with a long face on him, and reported that she had sprung a leak; an able seaman came aft alongside him, and the remainder of the hands stood about before the mainmast, evidently in a state of excitement.

"Well—what's the matter,' I asked.

"Ship's leaking, sir,' says the carpenter; 'she's got about nine inches o' water in her already.'

"Well, that won't hurt her much,' I said; 'whereabouts is the leak?'

"It's under the mainhold, sir,' said the seaman: 'I

* This is a common way, among seamen, of speaking of having reached a certain latitude. 45° South latitude would be a suitable locality for picking up a strong west wind, to carry him towards Australia.—ED.

heard the water running in, when we had the hatches off to air it.'

"We had had an unexpectedly fine and calm day, and I had taken the opportunity to have the hatches off for a few hours.

"Well, a leak that you can hear from deck is a considerable one. I hadn't had much experience of the kind, but I came to the conclusion that I ought to have a look at it if possible. Meanwhile, the pumps were manned, and the clear stream of water they threw told me that there was a considerable body of it down there. As the ship had been built for a steamer, it was possible to get down under the cargo to her skin, for the big engine bearers had been left in her; so I took the carpenter and a light down, and we crawled about, hearing the water plain enough, and presently we found the place—a hole in one of the plates, something like two inches by one, and a regular solid fountain coming through it. We couldn't get at it, so I made the carpenter go up for a hammer and cold chisel, and cut away a bit of the iron stringer that came in the way. He didn't like the job very much, being more of a wooden man than an iron one, and we were both wet through in a little while, with the splashing of the water on the frames as it came in. When I could crawl closer, I got my hand to the hole, and then I began to realise what was wrong. The plate was regularly *eaten through*: it wasn't a hole that had come by touching anything; it was sheer corrosion—rust—and when I took hold of the edge of the hole, the iron was as thin as a wafer. I could bend it about with my fingers. I took the hammer from the carpenter, and tapped the skin round about; and it was just as well I didn't tap too hard, or I should have *gone through*! I could feel the iron give when I pressed it."

"I went on deck, soaking wet—not a cheering sight for the crew—and then some of the men shouted to the carpenter, as he followed me, that one of the pumps was choked. There were two very good pumps, Downton's, that had been left in her when she was sold out of the navy. They wanted a good many hands to man them, but they carried a lot of water. Well, when the carpenter cleared this pump, he found that what had

choked it was large flakes of rust ; iron, rusted right through, so that it had come away in layers off our bottom !

"It was evident that the owners had never taken proper care of the ship, and neither Lloyd's nor the Board of Trade had troubled very much about her either ; and so here she was, in the Southern Ocean, with a hole in her bottom, and several more places which were all but in holes. What was I to do ? She wasn't fit to sail to Australia in that state, so I resolved to run for St. Paul's Island, which was about 950 miles off. It was the nearest land, and I thought if I could anchor, and had decent weather, I might shift some of the cargo and try to patch her up enough to get on.

"Luckily the wind held in the west, and we got over the ground pretty smartly, pumping all the while, and just keeping pace with the leak, except when the pumps choked with rust—there must have been bushels of it about down there—and then of course it gained very freely for a time, and so, on the whole, there was a good deal more water in her when we sighted St. Paul's than there was when we first found the leak.

"The men hailed the shout of 'Land !' with joy. So did I, for that matter, for I didn't know anything about the island then, and land is land, anyway—it can't sink under you—but of all the land created on this earth, St. Paul's Island is the most detestable. Do you know it ? Well, don't. We sighted it early in the morning, and by ten o'clock we were pretty close to it, on the north-west side. It's pretty high, 800 feet and more. Away to the southward we could see a tremendous surf breaking on a reef, so I kept round to the northward, and soon opened the east side. Then I saw what kind of a place it was. It's just a volcanic crater, broken away on one side, so as to leave a shallow entrance to the crater lake, which is five-and-twenty fathoms deep, about two-thirds of a mile across, and surrounded almost entirely by high, steep lava rock. In one or two places steam comes out, and there are hot springs, very nearly boiling, here and there. I stood in under snug sail, with the lead going, and having got well under the lee, I clewed up and dropped the anchor, and I never dropped my

anchor with less satisfaction. That sounds rum, no doubt, seeing that I had an unseaworthy ship under me, that couldn't be depended upon to float for many days, but I saw at a glance the unpracticability of the place as a harbour in any true sense. We were under the lee just then, but a northerly wind would blow right on shore. The island was stuck out there, in the middle of the Southern Ocean, with a swell perpetually rolling round it, and in itself it was just a big cinder, without a tree or shrub of any kind upon it.

"And yet, strangely enough, we found an inhabitant, a Frenchman, who lived there goodness knows how, for a considerable portion of the year, collecting fish, I suppose, for there is any amount of it to be had ; but he didn't expect any vessel to call for months.

"Well, here we were, and the only difference was that we were pumping at anchor, instead of pumping under way, for pump we had to, day and night. I landed in the crater—the entrance is only three or four feet deep—and found a patch of sandy beach round to the right, and the steam rising from two hot springs. The Frenchman came along and told me there was no water to be had, except from pools in one or two places during the wet season, which was on then.

"I went on board and got the hatches off to clear away some of the cargo, so as to get at the leak ; but that night our troubles began. In the middle watch, the wind shifted to the northward and westward, pretty fresh, and came in violent squalls from north and north-east every now and then. It was reflected from the high, rocky point, and we soon found that she was dragging her anchor—there is no good holding ground. The anchor caught on a lump of rock sometimes, then slipped off, and away she went. We let go another and she held on until daylight, when we found she had drifted a considerable distance to the south-east, and the water was much deeper, so we got under way and made a stretch to the north-east, then ran back to the anchorage. Before we could bring her up a terrific squall came round the north-west point, and blew her off into deep water again. There was nothing for it but to try

again, and this time we managed to bring up. By the time we had finished all this manœuvring the day was practically over, but there was pumping still to be done. The leak gained greatly while all the hands were busy with the sails and anchors. It was impossible to handle the cargo as yet, but we hoped for better luck on the morrow. No such thing! She parted one cable, and we lost the anchor—the other anchor dragged again—the wind freshened, the squalls came round the point like fury, and when we weighed again and stood off, it was under double reefs, and all hands were busy handling the ship in a lumpy sea, in which we could scarcely get her to stay,* and had once to wear round. There was little or no pumping done until we once more let go the anchor, and then there was good three feet of water in the hold. The men were getting done up. I must say they were a good lot, and worked like heroes, without growling; but I began to see what the end of it all must be.

“We could neither resume our voyage, stop the leak, nor hang on at our anchor. I spent some time the next morning examining the reef, or lip of the crater, which ran across the near side of the lake, and looking for a likely spot for my purpose; though, if only we had a few days of fine weather, I didn't despair of being able to do something; but how much fine weather do you get in July, in the Southern Ocean?

“By pumping in spells all night, we gained a little on the leak. I sent one watch to their bunks at four o'clock. I never seemed to have a chance of turning in at all, and the three mates were nearly in the same boat. It was nearly full daylight then, and the weather looked a bit better; but no sooner had we commenced to handle the cargo, than a squall came down, and blew us down past the crater, precious close to a rock, inshore, on which the sea broke occasionally. It was a near thing, in fact; and the only thing I could do was to slip the cable, make sail on the port tack, and stand out again.

* That is, to tack, or go round head to wind. To “wear” is to go round *stern* to wind. —ED.

"Well, now I had burnt my boats. There was a kedge anchor,* but that was no earthly use; so I got a bit of an offing, then wore round, and with a fine breeze, put her straight for the crater.

"'I'm running her ashore!' I told 'em; 'we'll keep the sail on her until she piles up, then clew up everything!'

"It's an ugly sort of business, running your craft on a rocky ledge, with a bit of a swell on; there's no knowing what may happen. I wondered whether she would fling the masts out of her, and kill some of the hands. Every other kind of thing one may have had experience of before one becomes a skipper; but this is a very special kind of job! However, I took the wheel myself, so as to make sure there would be no flinching, or going broadside on. I told the hands to lie down, or get hold of something, and watch the spars. On she went, at eight or ten knots; the swell lifted her at the right moment, and crash! she came on the reef; the masts surged and buckled forward, but nothing went. 'Clew up everything!' I shouted; and in a few minutes all the sail was off her. I made them send down the fore and main topsails, to make tents of. The manoeuvre was a complete success, if you can talk about success at all, when you start on your voyage and have to beach your ship! It went sorely against the grain with me, I can tell you; but I don't to this day see what else I could have done.

"The ship did not fall over much, and we had little difficulty in getting provisions out of her—water was the anxiety; we had enough to carry us to Melbourne, but we didn't know how long we might be here; so I put 'em on a pretty strict allowance, which they might supplement, if they could, from the pools, leaving one lot for the Frenchman. We rigged tents, stuck up a pole and hoisted our ensign on it, union down; it soon got precious ragged, that flag. I posted a lookout from daylight to dark, and the

* A small anchor, used in very calm weather, to save trouble; or sometimes laid out to haul a ship off when she has got aground.—ED.

chief officer and a crew of men held themselves in readiness all day to shove off in the long-boat at any moment, and board a vessel if she came near enough. A lot of ships come within sight of St. Paul's, but they don't as a rule come near; all they want is to verify their position, then strike across the Indian Ocean to Anjer.

"Twice the mate shoved off in a hurry, under sail and oars, once in a pretty heavy sea, and didn't get back until after dark—we hoisting a couple of lanterns on the old wreck. I feared he was done for that time, and they were precious wet and weary! There was an extraordinary amount of fish to be had, both in the lake and outside; shell-fish, too, in hundreds, and we could catch them and boil them right off, in the hot springs. I never came across any place except St. Paul's where you could do that with such ease.

"Well, we were over six weeks on that blessed island; and if it hadn't been precious wet weather, we should have fared badly for water."

"At last a Dutch ship came within hail, and in her we got a passage to Java; and I had the pleasant job of acquainting the new owners of the *Thessaly* that she was rotting on St. Paul's Island. Of course I cabled to them, and also to my daughter. The ship had been posted as overdue at home. The owners sent the crew home, and I went on to Australia to explain matters. She was insured all right, and I don't think they wanted too much explanation—not that she was dishonestly insured. I believe it was paid all right. So that's the story of the only ship I ever lost, and of my acquaintance with St. Paul's Island, which I never wish to renew: for sheer, downright cussedness, it takes the cake!"

"Thank you for a very interesting yarn," I said: "I don't see what else you could have done, certainly. The moral is, that even St. Paul's Island may have its uses, if only as a dumping ground for an unseaworthy ship. The sun's shining: shall we go out?"

A MIDSHIPMAN'S YARN

This is a midshipman's true yarn about the loss of H.M.S. Reynard in 1851, written in a letter to his parents: and he tells his story so remarkably well, that I give it just as he wrote it—the letter is dated H.M.S. Minden, Hong Kong, 18th June, 1851.

WHAT a change since last letter! I can imagine you all seated round the breakfast table, taken aback with astonishment at such a beginning. Her Majesty's Ship *Minden*, too; how does he come to be in her? Here is my answer: the poor old *Reynard* is no more—she is by this time in very minute portions, floating about in the vicinity of the 21st parallel of north latitude, and 106th meridian east of Greenwich. With this introduction I dive into the narrative of how it happened, with a description of my own feelings during the catastrophe. I forget the date of my last; but, however, we got in shortly after I finished it, and were barely in time for the mail.

As soon as we anchored we, of course, got ready for starting home as soon as possible; but we had a deal to do, so did not intend to start until the 30th. On the 27th, however, intelligence reached us of the loss of an English brig on the Prata Shoal, which is situated about 150 miles south-east of Hong Kong. The captain of the brig came across in an open boat to give notice here, and to get assistance for his men, who were suffering from want of food and water on a small coral island on the shoal. On account of this we were ordered to work double tides, so as to be ready to start for England on the 28th, and to render assistance to the shipwrecked crew on our way down. Accordingly on the 28th we sailed with the *Pilot* in

company for the shoals; we had foul winds, so we did not get near them until Friday evening. When darkness came on we steered so as to get to the island at daylight, giving the shoal, which we should have to pass, a good wide berth.

At about a quarter past four of the morning of the 31st, I found myself out of my hammock, and using the most strenuous efforts to put my jacket on inside out. It was not until I had discovered my mistake some seconds, and had observed that every one else was attiring himself with equal expedition, that I began to consider how I came out of bed at all. To this moment I have not the least idea how I turned out. Every one else seemed struck with the idea at the same moment, and we were about to consider whether we had not better turn in again and say nothing about it, when we heard on deck a confusion of voices, which can only be expressed by one word—"a row." We were on deck almost immediately; indeed, the whole of what I have described did not take up more than half a minute. We found the ship quite still, but hard and fast on the reef. The sails were all aback, and the engines going astern, but both failed to move her.

Stretching out on each bow was a long, light-coloured line, and this was all the indication there was of one of the most dangerous reefs in the world. It being fine weather, and but little swell, the ship lay quiet enough while we got the boat out and prepared to lay out an anchor, to prevent her getting broadside to the reef. We laid out one small anchor, and got the cable through the stern hawse-hole, and gave a good strain on it. (I am afraid I am getting rather nautical, but I can't help it in description.) It soon parted as the sea got up, so we laid out a larger one, but by this time she had begun to swing on to the reef, and to bump a little on the rocks. The last anchor was let go on the reef, but it was so steep that it slipped down into 400 feet of water, and we nearly lost it. However, they managed to hold on to the end of the cable, and we brought it to the ship in the same manner as the last, without the least effect, however, for the ship by this time was broadside on, and beginning to strike the ground very heavily. All hope of saving

the ship was out of the question now, for she began to fill slowly, and strained so much that the engines were rendered useless. When we reached this stage of the proceedings we went to breakfast, to prepare ourselves for work afterwards. In the meantime the ship fell over on her starboard side, thus exposing the deck to the sea, which began to rise with the tide, and every roller that came foaming in struck the ship and raised her upright, and when it had passed she came down with a crash on the rocks, sending everything loose on deck flying, and shaking the masts so that we all expected them to go by the board.

Our rigging being wire, and very elastic, held on; if we had had rope, I am sure the masts would not have stood as they did. All this time we were obliged to hold on as hard as we could, as the ship took our legs from under us at every surge, and if we had fallen down to leeward, we should not have picked ourselves up again with whole bones. After breakfast we turned the hands up and divided them into two parties, one of which remained on board, in charge of the first lieutenant and midshipmen, and the others were in the boats under the lee of the ship, to construct a raft, so as to save provisions, etc., under charge of the master. We were on a part of the reef about eight miles from the island before mentioned; we could just see the tops of the trees. We sent a boat up to the crew of the brig, with provisions and water. All this time we saw nothing of the *Pilot*, having parted company from her the day after leaving Hong Kong; but we knew that she would most likely go to the island first.

The party on board the ship proceeded to get the spars down from aloft. It was hard work, and very dangerous, but happily no one was hurt. As we got the spars down they were put overboard, and lashed together by the people in the boats, so that in about an hour and a half we had all the spars overboard, except the lower masts. We were all pretty well tired after this was done, as we had to work hard, and were glad to have a little rest. I was leaning against a gun, watching the raft progressing, and thinking of what else was to be done,

when I began to feel as if I should be very glad if the ship went to pieces at once, and we were all at once drowned. I felt as if it was quite absurd to save ourselves, when we might just as well be drowned comfortably. Then I felt as if I should like to lie down and never get up again, and then I heard voices shouting in my ears, and felt water on my face.

I opened my eyes and felt a whole host of people round me, raising me up, for I was flat on the deck; and from this I inferred that I had fainted, though for what reason I do not know, except from over-excitement, for I am not in the habit of performing manœuvres of that sort, and I was quite well and at work again in half an hour.

When the raft was finished it was getting dark, so it was moored alongside, and we picked out the best sleeping-places we could on deck, for it was not exactly safe to go below, in case of the ship's going to pieces in the night. It rained heavily all night, so none of us were particularly dry when daylight came, at which time we all got up and proceeded to get provisions up from below. This was a work of much difficulty, as the water had risen considerably in the night, the tide was rising, and there was every chance of her filling more.

The raft was towed inside the reef, at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the ship, and anchored there. It was only level with the water, so we did not expect it to carry much weight; however, it was the best that could be made under the circumstances. A large quantity of provisions and water were taken across the reef, and put in the pinnace, when she started for the island, to erect tents and get them ready for our reception; and as the ship was becoming more and more unsafe every moment from the continued bumping on the rocks, it was now that we began to think of saving some of our own things, as all the provisions that could be got were on deck ready. Accordingly I had ventured down below, with the intention of saving my sketches and a few clothes; but when I got below I found the water up to the beams of our berth, and when I went to look for my chest, I found that it was in minute particles, so I was glad enough to get on deck

again ; for, as the tide rose, the surf rushed in with redoubled violence, and caused the ship to surge so violently that everything went crash ! crash ! from one side to the other, clearing away everything stationary. The ship now worked so much that it was determined to cut away the masts. I shall never forget the melancholy feeling with which I saw the masts fall over. We all had, I do not know for what reason, a sort of glimmering hope that we should not lose the ship, but when the last mast fell with a crash, whatever hopes we had went with it, and when we looked at the stumps and ends of shrouds, and the desolation which appeared all along the decks, you never saw such a set of blank faces as we presented. For myself I could have blubbered with great comfort. The noise of the water rushing about below was terrific all this time, and the only safe plan of remaining on deck was to sit down and hold on "like bricks." The starboard guns were now hove overboard in the hope that she might fall over on the other side ; for if she remained in her present position it did not seem likely she would hold together, as she already showed signs of parting amidships. She soon did as we wished, for one large wave striking her, threw her perfectly upright, and then, all the weight being on the port side, she fell over, thus presenting her bottom to the sea. This was safer ; but, as we found to our cost, not so pleasant, for every sea, instead of raising her, came right over us, washing everything off the upper deck that was not secured. We were like a parcel of drowned rats in five minutes, and woe to any one who was standing up unsupported ; he was knocked down by the sea, carried away, and might be observed after a few minutes puffing and blowing amidst all sorts of confusion to leeward.

Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, we managed to keep our spirits up ; and from the captain downwards were as merry as crickets, every one becoming as facetious as possible. I forgot to say that just before we cut away the masts, we saw the *Pilot* endeavouring to beat up to us, but, after two or three tacks, by which she apparently got no nearer to us, she bore

up for the island, and we could occasionally see her mast-heads over it. We had got three or four casks of pork and water on the raft, which was all we had, or could get at, besides what had gone to the island. Towards evening it looked as if we should have wind, so it was determined to quit the wreck before dark. The ship being pretty quiet, I went below to see if anything was left that might be saved, and I never saw such a complete clearance as had been made. There was nothing of any kind a foot long. Everything was smashed into little fragments ; all the partitions were washed away, and all was clear abaft the engine-room. Cabin, gun-room, steerage, were all in one. As to our berths there was not the slightest trace of anything that could be construed into a mark of where they had once been ; except that in one corner there was a nice little pudding, composed of plates, dishes, bottles and glasses, knives and forks, all smashed into small pieces of half an inch in size. This was the case with the gunroom, and also the cabins ; each had its own peculiar corner full of smashed articles. In one cabin all the things had become, from the constant washing, woven into a complete rope ; and in this form were passed on deck, and *coiled down*.

Just before sunset we made preparation for quitting the wreck ; but as we had only our smallest boat on our side of the reef (the others not having water enough to cross), it took a long time, for the boat could not take more than five at a time, and even with that number she was nearly capsized two or three times in the surf. We saw all the men off first, and then we (the officers) went together, landed on the reef, and dragged the boat over to the raft, which was at this time aground. We were now about eighty strong on the raft, which at this time was not particularly dry. We had with us three boats, two being up at the island capable of holding about twenty-six, so the remainder would have to remain on the raft all night.

I have now to mention an action on the part of Captain Cracroft, which greatly raised him in my opinion, and I am

sure in every one else's present, which was this. It was Sunday night (I am sure I hope I shall never spend such another). As soon as we were all on the raft, Captain Cracroft called all hands round him, and made them a speech as follows: "My men, we have left the *Reynard*, where we have been together so long, probably for the last time. I am sure there is not one amongst you who does not know that, although we have no ship, we are just as much under martial law as ever we were; I therefore expect, and I am sure I shall receive, implicit obedience to my orders and those of the other officers (hear, hear). Now, my men, this is Sunday, and we have always been in the habit of keeping our Sundays properly as long as we have been together, and I do not think that we can do better now than to offer up a prayer to Almighty God for His mercies in preserving us thus far alive." He then repeated a short prayer, to which we all returned a fervent "Amen." There was a dead silence for a few minutes, and then one of the men sang out: "Three cheers for the Captain!" so we gave the three, and then we gave him three more, and then three more to make it square, and then we went to supper—the men on raw pork and rum, and the officers on beer and raw ham. It was not very inviting, but we were very hungry, so that gave it a relish. After the beer and ham, we looked for sleeping-places, but these were not so easy to find, and for this reason—one corner of the raft had got fast in the coral, and, as the tide rose, the corner being fast, of course the water came above the raft, which was anything but pleasant, as I found to my cost afterwards. I had brought a wet blanket from the wreck with me, and I hoped to manage pretty well with the aid of it, but afterwards I gave half of it to the first lieutenant, as he looked rather miserable. I then took my own peculiar half and went to the highest part of the raft, hoping to get to sleep, for I was very tired. I had not been there half an hour when I found myself floated out and almost off the raft. I got up stiff and intensely cold from lying in the water, and wandered, seeking where to go. I found the water up to my middle everywhere, except at the corner I had left; all the

men were singing in chorus (up to their middles), to keep their spirits up. I could not help laughing, though I was so uncomfortable ; it was so ridiculous to see a whole lot of people wandering about in the water and roaring away at the top of their voices. I found one of my messmates lying at full length on a hencoop, clear of the water, and seeming so comfortable that I felt greatly tempted to push him overboard and take his place ; however, I contented myself with sitting down beside him.

Daylight was now beginning to show itself a little, when one of the boats came close to where I was sitting, so I got into it and lay on top of one of the men. He struggled rather violently at first ; but I was too comfortable to move for him, so he was obliged to bear it. I managed to get about an hour's sleep here, and then we got up and looked about us. I found that my messmate of hencoop notoriety had been floated off the raft, and tumbled overboard shortly after I left him.

The first lieutenant met with a similar fate, having passed the night in an empty pork-cask, which overturned with him as soon as it floated. Being only half awake when they lifted him up, he was very anxious to "go below and change his clothes." The first thing we did after all getting awake was to serve out a wineglassful of rum all round, which I was very glad to get. I was none the better for the raw ham and salt water. We sent a boat to see if she could get to the wreck, but the surf was so heavy that she was obliged to come back without reaching her. Upon this we all started for the island, and arrived there in about three hours. We found it a low island, in the shape of a horseshoe, a beautiful, clear bay running up between the two arms. Thousands of sea-birds were hovering round and over it, making a most discordant noise. There was a quantity of short brushwood and bushes all over the island, and a good many stunted trees. As we passed up the bay we saw the *Pilot* off the island under sail, for there is no anchorage near. Our tent had been reared on the right-hand arm going up the bay. I landed close to it, and we all went up and lay down under the shade, quite tired out,

but not before we had refreshed the inward man with some cooked provender. After we were refreshed, the men were divided into parties, some to build a wall round the tent and arrange it, some to get up the provisions from the boats, and some to dig wells. I took a well-digging party, and in a short time we made a very respectable well, with bucket attached, though I cannot say the water was particularly good. After this work was done, the several parties were called in, and we had supper of boobies' eggs and rice, and very good provision it was.*

At this time Captain Cracroft intended remaining on the island, and sending the *Pilot* with the intelligence to Hong Kong. After we had all turned into our sandy bed, however, the *Pilot's* jolly-boat came on shore with a letter from Captain Hickley, using such strong arguments to induce Captain Cracroft to come on board the *Pilot* with the ship's company, and desert the wreck altogether, that he determined to do so. Accordingly, next morning, we left the island, and bid goodbye to our old ship for ever.

Behold us then once more on a man-of-war's deck, and looking more like a lot of pirates than anything else, not a soul amongst us having a single thing he could call his own, except a few ragged clothes we had on; however, by dint of begging, borrowing, and stealing, we managed to get washed and dressed in something respectable.

We arrived in Hong Kong on Tuesday morning, and since that we have been on board this ship, which was originally employed as a store-ship, but is now cleared out for our reception, and that of one hundred of the 59th regiment.

All the people here, except the tip-top society, have been exceedingly kind to us all, giving and lending right and left. They have got up a subscription for the men, and are going to present Captain Cracroft with a piece of plate, and I don't know what they are not going to do. I think that

* The "booby" is a large sea-bird, so named by sailors, because it will often sit still, in a stupid sort of fashion, and allow itself to be caught or knocked over,

now I have spun this letter out to a sufficient length. We are just beginning to get settled in our present position, in which at first we were very uncomfortable. I suppose you will consider me a sort of modern Robinson Crusoe on a small scale. I am quite willing to bear that character, only I have no wish to be thought of as a dirty-looking fellow, with a hairy coat and a worn-out umbrella over my head, or in any other character, except that of yours, etc.

NOTE.—Pratas (not Prata) Island and reef is a very dangerous one, right in the course between Hong Kong and the Philippine Islands. Captain Cracroft attributed his going on it to varying currents; he had had no observation of the sun for twenty-four hours. The *Reynard* was a steam sloop, but they were making the passage chiefly under sail. The *Pilot* was a sailing brig.—ED.

“ALL SAVED”

I HAVE selected the above title for this story, because it is a very unusual thing for every one to be saved from a wreck under such circumstances; and had it not been for the gallantry and good seamanship of one or two men, this title certainly could not have been adopted.

At the end of the year 1795, the *Dutton*, East Indiaman, hired as a transport, sailed for the West Indies, with part of the 2nd, or Queen's regiment, having on board also a number of women and children, so that, with the numerous crew always carried by these vessels, the total number on board was about six hundred. The weather, as is so often the case at this season, was tempestuous; contrary gales prevailed day after day, and after having tried in vain for seven weeks to get clear of the Channel, and having a number of sick on board, the captain put into Plymouth. There was no breakwater in those days to protect the anchorage in Plymouth Sound, and finding the gale increase, and the wind setting right on shore, the anchor was weighed, on the afternoon of the 26th January, 1796, with the object of running into the Catwater, or inner anchorage, for greater security. There was a pilot on board, but he was unaware that a buoy, which marked the extremity of a shoal, had been washed away; the ship took the ground with her stern, damaging the rudder, and immediately became unmanageable. Drifting helplessly, she struck on submerged rocks under the citadel, and lay broadside on to the full sweep of the wind and sea; her masts went by the board, and in a few minutes she was a total wreck. The soldiers, women and children, and

most of the crew, could be seen gathered on deck, and the officers, instead of assisting these unfortunate people, proceeded to effect their own escape—or some, at least, did so—by means of a hawser which they managed to get ashore, and which was held by a number of people there; a block travelled upon this rope, with a ring attached, into which a man could get, and be dragged on shore by a smaller rope attached to it. This, however, was a method of which few except seamen could avail themselves. The hawser, in spite of the efforts of those on shore to keep it taut, would sometimes dip the passenger in the surf, then spring up as the ship lurched off again, and most people could not hold on under such circumstances; certainly women and children could not be so landed.

Meanwhile, it was evident that the ship, beating incessantly upon the sharp rocks, must before long become so damaged as to cease to afford any refuge to the people, and yet no one appeared to know what to do. The captain of the *Dutton* had been landed immediately upon arrival, being ill, and so his skill and authority, to which every one would have looked, were not available. The soldiers had got at the spirit-room, after the utterly reckless and idiotic fashion of so many of this class in time of peril, and many of them were drunk; this, of course, should have been prevented by their own officers and those of the transport. A resolute man, with a brace of pistols at the spirit-room hatch, would have served the purpose, as in the wreck of the *Abergavenny*.* But all was confusion—soldiers, drunk and sober, seamen, women with children in arms, young girls, all huddled together on the deck, banged about, thrown from side to side by the violent lurches of the ship as the seas rolled in; and many, probably most of them, apparently doomed to death, under the very walls of Plymouth Citadel, for lack of a skilled and authoritative leader.

Fortunately, such an one was at hand. Sir Edward Pellew, captain of the *Indefatigable* frigate, then refitting at Plymouth,

* See p. 106.

was driving with his wife to a dinner-party—they dined earlier in those days than we do now—and seeing people running excitedly towards the Hoe, he stopped the carriage and inquired the cause. Upon learning that it was a wreck, he left Lady Pellew to go alone to dinner, and went down to see if he could be of any assistance. Arrived upon the scene, he found the very deplorable state of affairs which I have described—a fine ship beating to pieces within pistol shot of the shore, right under the Citadel—and nobody, apparently, trying to save the unhappy people on board.

Sir Edward saw at once that something better could be done, and he immediately offered a reward to any one who would go on board—by means of the ring on the hawser, of course, for there was no other way—with a message from him as to the means to be adopted. The mission, however, was not an enticing one; to be pulled on board, now in the surf, now high in air, on the hawser, to say nothing of encountering the wreckage of the masts; to be carried in this manner to join a crowd of people already in great peril of losing their lives through the breaking up of the vessel. No; in our modern way of speaking, “it was not good enough,” not a volunteer came forward; rather surprising, I think, for west-country seamen and fishermen have often shown that they will go anywhere and dare anything, but I suppose just the right sort of man was not on the spot.*

* It has struck me, in reading the accounts of this wreck, as rather strange that, having established some kind of communication with the shore, which could at any rate be used by seamen, some more of them were not being landed in this manner when Sir Edward Pellew arrived upon the scene. There appears to have been nothing doing at this moment—the people on shore and the unfortunate ones on the wreck were apparently at a standstill, gazing at each other. This fact, and the failure of any volunteer in response to Sir Edward’s appeal may, perhaps, be accounted for by the tangled wreckage of the masts, etc., having spread out in the surf, so as to frequently foul the hawser when it slacked up, making the passage increasingly perilous; Sir Edward, as we see, was very roughly handled from this cause while being hauled on board. On the other hand, the seamen on board may have generously abstained from deserting the soldiers and

“Then I’ll go myself!” said Pellew, and go he did. He was in his uniform, with his sword on, all rigged out for the dinner-party, and he did not stop to take his sword off, though you can scarcely imagine a more awkward affair to have dangling about your legs when you are being hauled off to a ship through surf and wreckage ; but perhaps he had an idea, before he started, that his sword might come in handy.

The crowd, who knew him, cheered him as he got into the ring on the hawser, and signalled to be hauled on board. He had a terrible passage, for the hawser, as it fell slack, had caught under the tossing wreck of the mainmast, and under this, immersed in the surf, the gallant Pellew was dragged, receiving many bruises, which afterwards confined him to bed for a week, but he had no time to think about them then.

Arriving on board, he told them who he was. They knew his name as a gallant naval captain, already distinguished. They cheered him heartily for his pluck, and then he told them that he would take command of the ship and arrange for their rescue ; that every one would be saved if they did as he told them, but that he would run any man through who disobeyed him ; and there was his sword, all ready.

I don’t suppose for a moment that any one thought of disobeying him. A man of Pellew’s stamp, who will evidently be as good as his word, will carry all before him on such an occasion ; though he was perfectly right to take that line, seeing that he had some silly, drunken men to deal with.

He got to work quickly, and the seamen, seeing that he was a man who knew what he was about, readily carried out his directions. Two more hawsers were got on shore, and cradles rigged upon them, with a block and lines to haul them to and fro ; the crowd on shore attended to the ends of the hawsers, easing them over as the ship lurched away, and taking in the slack as she rolled back again ; but she was tearing her bottom

women in their extremity ; but some had already passed over, as we know, and the force of example and the instinct of self-preservation would be overwhelmingly strong under such circumstances. If they did remain from such motives, it is immensely to their credit.—ED.

out on the rocks all this while. Would she last long enough? That must have been the question which each one was asking himself, while the irresistible instinct of self-preservation prompted him to struggle for first place in the cradles.

But Pellew was there, with his drawn sword, to say who should go next, and not a man would be permitted to pass on shore until the women and children, the sick and helpless were safe. Drunken men recoiled from his determined eye and menacing sword; his voice, which he was not accustomed to raise without instant obedience to his commands—who can estimate the true worth of such a man at such a moment?

Meanwhile, there were other seamen at hand who were every bit as unwilling as Sir Edward to see life sacrificed without heroic effort to prevent it. The first lieutenant of the *Indefatigable*, Mr. Pellowe, and Mr. Thompson, the master, shoved off in two boats to render assistance, but so hazardous was it to approach the wreck in their large and heavy boats, that they were compelled to abandon the attempt, and run into shelter again.

Another boat was more successful. Mr. Jeremiah Coghlan, mate of a merchant vessel, quite a young man, who had been only three years at sea, put out in a small boat from his ship, picking up on the road Mr. Edsell, signal midshipman to the port admiral, and these two young fellows, chiefly through Coghlan's great skill and undaunted courage, succeeded in getting alongside, and assisted in passing the hawsers on shore, at the risk of their lives.

A small vessel, a cutter or sloop, manned by hardy west-country seamen, beat out in the teeth of the gale, and, with great skill in handling, was kept near the wreck; Mr. Hemmings, master-attendant of the dockyard, also appeared on the scene, with two boats manned by dockyard hands—and there are few better boatmen than west-country "dockyard mates," as they are somewhat derisively termed by men-of-war's men*—and these contrived to get alongside, and con-

* A good many years ago the flagship of the Channel Squadron had a "crack" twelve-oared cutter, with a splendid crew, which had beaten all

veyed many of the sick and the women and children to the gallant little sloop. Coghlan's little boat was in the thick of it, too, all the time, and many lives were saved through his skill and courage.

One woman had a child of three weeks old, born amidst the turmoil of their tossing in the Channel, and resisted strenuously at first Sir Edward Pellew's request that she would entrust her child to his care for a few minutes, to be placed safely in a boat. At length she yielded, and reached the shore in safety with her child, which would probably have been impossible had she retained it in her arms.

The soldiers' turn came next. One by one, as they were told off, they entered a boat, or got on the cradle; no crowding, no panic was permitted; drunk or sober, the gallant Pellew had them all under control; then the ship's crew, in like manner, the ship grinding all the while on the rocks, the gale shrieking overhead.

Almost the last to leave the wreck, when all was practically accomplished, was Sir Edward Pellew, and you may imagine what a greeting he had when he was hauled on shore. The few remaining men followed, the wreck was cleared, and not long afterwards she went to pieces.

Sir Edward Pellew performed many brilliant services in the navy, and was afterwards created Viscount Exmouth in recognition of them; but probably he looked back upon this episode at Plymouth with more pride and satisfaction than upon his exploits in the face of the enemy.

There was immense popular enthusiasm over it, of course; he was given the freedom of Plymouth, the merchants of Liverpool presented him with a valuable service of plate, and six weeks later he was made a baronet.

the boats in the squadron, and used to pull about with a cock in the bows as a challenge to all-comers. One fine day the "maties" took it up, brought out a very good twelve-oared boat from the dockyard store, and pulled round the flagship. They looked rather a queer crew in their nondescript attire, compared with the smart bluejackets, but they gave them a hollow beating.—ED.

His letter to Vice-Admiral Onslow, who had hoisted his flag at Plymouth a day or two previously, displays his character in a very pleasing manner :

“DEAR SIR,

“I hope it happened to me this afternoon to be serviceable to the unhappy sufferers on Board the *Dutton*, and I have much satisfaction in saying that every soul in her was taken out before I left her, except the first mate, boat-swain, and third mate, who attended the hauling ropes to the shore, and they eased me on shore by the hawser. It is not possible to refrain from speaking in raptures of the handsome conduct of Mr. Hemmings, the master-attendant, who, at the imminent risk of his life, saved hundreds. If I had not hurt my leg and been otherwise much bruised, I would have waited upon you, but hope this will be a passable excuse.

“I am, with respect, sir,

“Your most obedient humble servant,

“ED. PELLEW.”

Sir Edward did not fail to recognise the services of Jeremiah Coghlan, the young mate of the merchant vessel. He sent for him and offered to enter him in the navy, and see to his advancement in it. Coghlan accepted the offer with enthusiasm, was shipped as a midshipman on board Pellew's ship, and was subsequently famous for his gallantry and skilful seamanship ; indeed, his capture of the French gun-brig *Cerbère*, mounting seven guns, and full of men, with twenty men in a single boat, is one of the most brilliant affairs ever recorded.

A RUNNING FIGHT AND SHIPWRECK

IN the year 1796 the French Republic decided to send an expedition for the capture of Ireland, or, rather, for the purpose of freeing Ireland, which was much disaffected; from the English yoke, and setting her up, as it were, in business on her own account, anticipating that she would then become a valuable ally of France in bringing about the desired humiliation of England.

With this end in view, an army of some twenty thousand men was embarked on board the ships of a powerful fleet; but I am not going into this business now. It was badly managed, and resulted in considerable confusion and loss to the French, who never came anywhere near the accomplishment of their scheme. A number of their ships got to Bantry Bay, but they were blown out again by a heavy gale of wind, and eventually found their way home in dribblets. Eighteen ships, in fact, never got home at all, being either wrecked or captured by the English, and it is with one of these and two of our own ships that we are now concerned.

The *Droits de l'Homme*, a French 74-gun ship, separated from her consorts in the gale, hung about off the coast of Ireland for a day or two, and then her captain came to the conclusion that the best thing he could do was to return to Brest, and he quitted the Irish coast on the 9th of January, 1797, having first obtained some compensation, however, by capturing a rich English vessel, the *Cumberland*, an armed merchant vessel, but no match, of course, for the French seventy-four. On board the *Cumberland* was an English military officer, Lieutenant Pipon, of the 63rd Regiment, returning from the West Indies on leave of absence on account

of ill health. He and nearly all on board the *Cumberland* were, of course, transferred to the *Droits de l'Homme* as prisoners of war.

On the 13th of January, the weather being thick and stormy, the French captain, La Crosse, believing that he was nearing Brest, was standing under easy sail to the southward, when he sighted two sail, which he imagined were chasing him. They were, after all, probably his own countrymen; but in running away from them he ran within sight, about 3.30 p.m., of two others, and this time there was no mistake, for they were the *Indefatigable*, forty-four guns, Captain Sir Edward Pellew, and the *Amazon*, thirty-six guns, Captain R. C. Reynolds. They were then about one hundred and fifty miles from Ushant, and the two English vessels gave chase. The *Indefatigable*, however, was six or seven miles ahead of the *Amazon*, but that did not prevent Sir Edward from following up the big Frenchman.

The weather was boisterous, and squally, and soon after four o'clock the *Droits de l'Homme* carried away her fore and maintopmasts, which of course enabled the English ship to come up more rapidly; and at half-past five she was within gunshot, and a hot action commenced. A 74-gun ship should, of course, have been far more than a match for the 44-gun English frigate; but the former was more or less of an experimental ship, and among other things her lower-deck ports were much nearer the water than was customary, so when they were opened, in order to fire the guns, the heavy sea threw such a quantity of water inboard that it was found impossible to work the guns, and they were very glad to close the ports again, for the ship was in danger of being swamped. This, and the crippled condition of the French ship aloft—for, though they had cleared away the wreck, they had not had time to send up new spars—somewhat equalised the battle; but the *Indefatigable* was a good deal knocked about aloft. They pounded away, all the while sailing towards the French coast; darkness came on, and presently, about a quarter to seven, the *Amazon* arrived upon the scene, crowding sail to overtake

the others, and in consequence running past the Frenchman. The *Indefatigable* then did likewise, in order to repair damages aloft, and the seventy-four, with her crippled masts, ran on, like a great wounded lion, towards Brest. The two frigates, however, soon tackled her again, and all through the night the running fight continued. The conditions of wind and sea may be imagined from Sir Edward Pellew's description, in his official despatch: "As soon as we had replaced some necessary rigging, and the *Amazon* had reduced her sail, we commenced a second attack, placing ourselves, after some broadsides, upon each quarter; and this attack, often within pistol-shot, was by both ships unremitted for above five hours; we then sheered off to secure our masts. It would be needless to relate to their lordships every effort that we made in an attack that commenced at a quarter before six p.m., and did not cease, excepting at intervals, until half-past four a.m. I believe ten hours of more severe fatigue was scarcely ever experienced; the sea was high; the people on the maindeck up to their middles in water. Some guns broke their breechings four times over,* some drew the ring-bolts from the sides, and many of them were repeatedly drawn immediately after loading; all our masts were much wounded, the maintopmast completely unrigged, and saved only by uncommon alacrity."

The *Amazon*, a smaller vessel, had even greater difficulties to contend with. Nearly all her spars were badly wounded, her mizentopmast, gaff, boom, and maintopsailyard shot away, and she had three feet of water in the hold. Still the two frigates hung on the heels of the seventy-four all through the dark and stormy January night, plying their guns, clearing wreck aloft, replacing damaged rigging amidst the gloom, in a gale of wind, and under fire from their big antagonist. The French ship had lost her mizenmast about half-past ten, so

* The breeching was a thick rope, the ends secured to ring-bolts in the ship's side; it passed through a ring at the breech of the gun, to restrain it when it recoiled on being fired. When the ship was rolling, there would, of course, sometimes be a tremendous strain on the breeching.

that she was now in a sorry plight aloft ; but she plunged and reeled onwards towards the French coast, steering, as her captain imagined, for Brest.

Perhaps none of the three captains, in the heat and stress of battle and weather, quite realised how rapid was their approach to a dangerous coast ; but about twenty minutes past four in the morning, the moon showing out for a moment or two, Lieutenant Bell, of the *Indefatigable*, who was on the forecastle, thought he saw the land ; then he was sure, and ran aft to report to the captain. By the time he did so, the breakers were visible, and this, in the darkness, meant that they were close on board.

The two frigates were at this moment engaging the enemy from ahead, one upon either bow, the *Indefatigable* to the starboard ; the wind, a gale from the westward, was nearly dead aft, blowing right on shore.

It was a critical moment. Nothing but the greatest presence of mind, the promptest execution of orders, could save the ship. The helm was put hard a port, the men were ordered up from the guns to brace up the yards and set the courses ; the topsails were, fortunately, already close-reefed, in order to keep beside the crippled Frenchman, and the ship's head was now pointed to the southward, clear of danger, as Pellew hoped, for he imagined they were close off Brest, and that the land receded from them in that direction. But they had other matters to think of at the moment. The enemy, not yet seeing the breakers, and imagining that the frigates, as they swung round opposite ways under the helm, had been beaten off, delivered a deadly broadside at the *Indefatigable*, the most destructive she had yet received. Her hull was struck in seven places, all three lower-masts were wounded, and the maintopmast rigging completely cut away from one side—fortunately, the lee side, or I think the ship must have been lost. If the weather maintopmast rigging, which had all the strain upon it at the moment, had been shot away, the topmast itself must have gone. As it was, all held on, and the ship, close on a wind, steered to the southward.

But she was not yet safe. Before daybreak they saw breakers again, upon the lee bow ; the ship was got round on the other tack ; not by "tacking" head to wind, for she would not come round in such a sea ; they were obliged to "wear" stern to wind, which meant losing a certain amount of ground. It was now evident that they were not, as was supposed, in the Bay of Brest, and daylight was awaited with intense anxiety. It showed them the breakers close to again and, wearing ship, they once more stood to the southward. A few minutes later, as the light broadened, they beheld a melancholy sight ; their late antagonist, the big seventy-four, upon her side, the surf roaring over her. The *Indefatigable*, safe as yet, passed within a mile of her, but nothing could, of course, be done to help the crew. "The miserable fate of her brave but unhappy crew," says Sir Edward Pellew, "was perhaps the more sincerely lamented by us from the apprehension of suffering a similar misfortune. We passed her within a mile, in a very bad condition, having at that time four feet of water in our hold, a great sea, and the wind dead on shore, but we had ascertained beyond a doubt our situation to be that of Hodierne Bay,* and that our fate depended upon the possible chance of weathering the Penmarck Rocks."

Exhausted as they were after fighting the foe and the weather all night, they had still to use all their skill in handling the sails, supporting the masts, and taking every possible seamanlike precaution ; if a rope failed, it might mean destruction ; if a topmast went, it was absolutely sure. The canvas was carried on, far more than would have been considered prudent under ordinary circumstances in such a breeze ; intently they looked ahead, through the driving rain and spray, for the headland, and the seas dashing upon it ; at eleven o'clock it was sighted. Nearer they came : would she weather it ? Yes, she will ; at length it is certain. She passes half a mile to windward of the rocks—a very little thing half a mile looks at

* Audierne Bay on the atlas ; just to the south of Ushant ; Penmarck Point is the southern extremity of the bay, with dangerous rocks off it,—ED.

sea. The *Indefatigable* was saved, but nothing was known about the *Amazon*; all they knew was that, when they hauled up to the southward she had hauled up to the northward, as was natural; otherwise she might have been run down by the Frenchman. Sir Edward Pellew hoped, indeed, that his consort had escaped, but she was far more seriously damaged aloft than the *Indefatigable*, and her captain's report ran as follows:

"The *Amazon* began to engage about seven o'clock in the evening on the 13th, and continued a running fight until five the next morning, which brought us forty leagues from where we began the chase, near the French coast; and the wind blowing strong directly upon the shore, in the eagerness of pursuit, and during the heat of battle, we were unable accurately to calculate the distance we had run; and our masts, yards, and rigging being miserably shattered, it was not possible for us to work off shore. . . . In this condition, and with three feet water in our hold, we struck the ground a little after five in the morning, and not more than ten minutes after we had ceased firing. . . . From half-past five to nine o'clock we were employed in making rafts to save the men; and it gives me unspeakable comfort that not a man was lost after the ship struck the shore, except six that stole away the cutter from the stern, and were drowned. Myself and officers quitted not the ship until with great care and pains we got the wounded and every man out of her."

Of course, they were compelled to give themselves up as prisoners; but they were well treated, and were exchanged before very long.

And now we must see how it fares with the unfortunates on board the *Droits de l'Homme*. Alas! we find a great contrast with the steady courage and discipline of Captain Reynolds and his crew.

Lieutenant Pipon thus relates his experiences (you will recollect that he was a prisoner on board):

"At about four in the morning a dreadful convulsion at the foot of the foremast aroused us from a state of anxiety for our

fate, to the idea that the ship was sinking. It was the foremast that fell over the side ; in about a quarter of an hour an awful mandate from above was re-echoed from all parts of the ship : ' Poor Englishmen ! Poor Englishmen ! Come on deck at once ! We are all lost ! ' Every one rather flew than climbed up. Though scarcely able before to move from sickness, I now found an energetic strength in all my frame, and soon gained the upper deck ; but oh, what a sight ! Dead, wounded, and living intermingled in a state too shocking to describe : not a mast standing, a dreadful loom of the land, and breakers all round us. The *Indefatigable*, on the starboard quarter, appeared standing off in a most tremendous sea, from the Penmarck Rocks, which threatened her with destruction. On the larboard side was seen the *Amazon*, within two miles, just struck on the shore. Our own fate drew near. The ship struck, and immediately sank. Shrieks of horror and dismay were heard from all quarters, whilst the merciless waves tore from the wreck many early victims. Daylight appeared, and we beheld the shore lined with people, who could render us no assistance. At low water rafts were constructed, and the boats got in readiness to be hoisted out. The dusk arrived, and an awful night ensued. The dawn of the second day brought with it still severer miseries than the first, for the wants of nature could hardly be endured any longer, having been already near thirty hours without any means of subsistence, and no possibility of procuring them. At low water a small boat was hoisted out, and an English captain and eight sailors succeeded in getting to the shore. Elated at the success of these men, all thought their deliverance at hand, and many launched out on their rafts ; but death soon ended their hopes.

" Another night renewed our afflictions. The morn of the third day, fraught with greater perils than ever, appeared ; our continued sufferings made us exert the last effort, and we English prisoners tried every means to save as many fellow-creatures as lay in our power. Larger rafts were constructed, and the largest boat was got over the side. The first consider-

ation was to lay the surviving wounded, the women, and helpless men in the boat; but the idea of equality, so fatally promulgated among the French, lost them all subordination, and nearly one hundred and twenty jumped into the boat, in defiance of their officers, and sank it."

This is a terrible picture of the condition of affairs on board a large French ship of that period; the "idea of equality," as Lieutenant Pipon says, was no doubt at the bottom of it—it was "Citizen This" and "Citizen That"—Jack's as good as his master! and he isn't; that's the worst of it! Did anybody on board the *Indefatigable*, or the wrecked East Indiaman at Plymouth, think he was anything like as good a man as Sir Edward Pellew?

Well, equality or no equality, these poor wretches, without apparently a leader fit to take charge and save them, had an awful time. For another day and night they hung on the wreck. Hundreds had already perished. A French military officer of rank attempted to swim ashore and obtain succour, but was drowned.

At length, on the 17th January, a brig and a cutter arrived upon the scene; and by means of boats and rafts about one hundred and fifty were landed that day: nearly four hundred, according to Lieutenant Pipon, were left on board another night; and half of them were found to be dead in the morning. He and his two brother officers, Captain La Crosse, the General Commanding, or intended to command, the troops on the ill-fated and mis-handled expedition, were rescued, with the other survivors, on the morning of the 18th. The English prisoners were sent home in a ship specially fitted out for the purpose, as it was considered that they had earned their liberty by their sufferings, and their efforts to save life.

Thus ended this terrible running fight and shipwreck; the *Droits de l'Homme* had on board seamen and soldiers to the number of sixteen or seventeen hundred—there appear also to have been some women, according to Lieutenant Pipon—women, on such an expedition! They did queer things in

those days. Of these people over one thousand perished for lack of discipline and presence of mind ; while Captain Reynolds lost only six men, through their own fault in hastily taking a small boat on their own account, instead of awaiting the orders of their cool and skilful commander. Reynolds was honourably acquitted by the court which tried him for the loss of his ship, and was highly commended for his plucky perseverance in the fight in such wild weather, and the clever management by which he saved his crew.

This excellent officer perished ten or twelve years later, when his ship, the *St. George*, and the *Defence*, her consort, were driven on shore, in bitter winter cold, in the Baltic. Only eighteen were rescued out of the two ships' companies.

THE END OF BUNKER FROST

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

GREAT excitement! Orders from the Admiral that we are to fill up with extra allowance of coal and provisions, and be ready, after the arrival of the next mail from Hong Kong, to sail for a long cruise among the islands of the Pacific; first to pick up some castaways from a coral island, then to inquire into and take all proper means to suppress the illegal traffic in natives, and particularly to catch, if possible, and convey to Sydney for trial on a charge of murder, one Captain Frost, commonly known as "Bunker" Frost, a very great scoundrel.

No cause, you may say, for so much excitement. Well, we had been swinging round our anchor for eight solid months at Yokohama, and that is a pretty dull sort of business; billiards at the club, a walk round by "the cutting," a very occasional dance or dinner party. A trip up-country was the best thing, but it cost money, which is never too plentiful in the service.

This new programme promised a complete change, at any rate, and possibly some fun, chasing and capturing Bunker Frost, who was reported to command a very fast brig (which he had stolen), well armed. He was practically a pirate, in fact, and was the leading hand in the disgraceful entrapment of natives from the many islands dotted about the Pacific, who were enticed on board by presents of coloured beads and other cheap trinkets, and then clapped under hatches and conveyed to Australia, where it was represented that they had

willingly shipped as labourers. The captains of these vessels made a handsome profit out of it, and if the "blackbirds" were troublesome, Bunker Frost would playfully practise with his revolver at them through the hatchway gratings, leaving them subdued and submissive, with a few bleeding comrades and a corpse or two for company.

Frost would also visit the islands where palm oil and other things were collected, rifle the stores, and kill the agent if he made any fuss about it. So it was high time his little games were put a stop to, and we were the boys to do it!

"We" were the captain, officers, and crew of H.M.S. *Panther*, a large corvette, perhaps rather out of date even at that period—about the year 1872—but a good, wholesome craft, able to steam or sail creditably.

So, about the middle of March, off we went for Ailu Island, where, some months previously, a drunken merchant skipper had contrived to lose his craft by running her on shore on the *lee* side of it, which was really very ingenious of him. Some one had got away in a little cock-boat, and reported five men left on the island, with nothing but shellfish and seaweed to live upon.

We found Ailu all right; it is one of those nameless little specks you will see dotted about on a map of the Pacific. When you get there, the chief thing you see is a terrific surf breaking on the coral reefs; but we found a way in between, and brought off our five men, and very lean they looked after many weeks of such diet!

Then we proceeded upon our investigations, calling at several islands, at each of which an European of sorts came off in a native canoe. I am afraid they were all of that class of person who has "left his country for his country's good," and precious scoundrels some of them looked. They all had the same story to tell, however: there had been no kidnapping there, oh! for quite a long time. Bunker Frost? Oh, yes, they knew about him, but they didn't know where he was just then; and so on. We arrived at the conclusion that they lied about the traffic because they were interested in it, and about

Bunker Frost because they were afraid of him ; and I think we were not far adrift.

However, we were not yet in the thick of it. The principal traffic had been among islands farther south, and we now set our course for Bonham Island, in the hope of something more definite. We soon found that, in a sailing vessel—and such we were, as far as possible, obliged to be, for the coal had to be saved for emergencies—it is one thing to sail for Bonham Island, and quite another thing to get there. There was said to be a good entrance between the reefs, and a snug anchorage inside, but we boxed about round that blessed island for more than a week, often in a calm, sometimes in heavy squalls, with tremendous rain, while capricious currents played the mischief with our reckoning ; and as surely as we got close inshore, in the hope of finding the entrance, down would come the rain, obscuring everything, and we had to haul off for fear of leaving our bones there.

At length, one fine day, we stood close in, and the navigator was just about to shove off in the cutter, to take some soundings, when out from between the reefs sailed a tidy schooner, which immediately hoisted English colours, and stood over towards us.

Our boat speedily brought the skipper on board : he was no "blackbirder," but an honest Scotsman, named Saunders, who owned the schooner, and traded among the islands, having his headquarters at Bonham Island.

Saunders knew all about Bunker Frost, though there had been no recent kidnapping from Bonham.

"But," he said, "there's a man on shore who can tell you more than I can. He's a Frenchman, but he speaks English, and Frost stole his schooner from him only a fortnight since. I'll take the ship in, if you'll get up steam. You can get fresh vegetables, and I'll sell you a pig or two, if you want 'em."

Accordingly, in an hour or two, in we went under the efficient pilotage of Saunders, who knew every inch of the ground, and steered us across the large lagoon to a good anchorage in seven fathoms.

The Frenchman was watching us from the beach, and did not wait for our boat to fetch him ; before the anchor was well down, he came alongside in a canoe, and arrived, gesticulating on the quarter-deck. He was dancing mad, and could scarcely speak for excitement.

"De capitaine. Where is de capitaine? He will do me justice—de English capitaine, oh, yes! My ship—my, my schoonare, you call it, yes?"

"There's the captain," said the stolid quartermaster, pointing to the bridge. Saunders beckoned the Frenchman, and he went aft, muttering about his "schoonare."

He had a tragic story to tell. Frost, he said, had confiscated his vessel and cargo at Arrowsmith Island, about forty miles distant, had killed two of his men, and threatened to cut his throat if he did not clear out.

"And he will so, he will so," said the Frenchman, drawing his hand across his throat ; "he is one murderer." Frost had evidently "established a funk" here, with a vengeance ; the man was white with fear as he stammered out his ghastly narration.

The captain took him down below, and gave him a cocktail to steady his nerves.

"Now, where is Frost. Do you know?"

"Somewhere near—Arrowsmith, or Mulgrave Island—he put my men—three men he did not shoot—he put them on Arrowsmith—you go there, you hear—I come too."

"Yes, yes, you shall come," said the captain soothingly ; "we'll settle Mr. Frost, if we come across him. We'll start at once."

However, there was little use in this, as it was now late in the afternoon, and we could not make the island in the dark ; just before sunset, however, we steamed out, on the urgent representation of Saunders.

"That man has spies about, native spies ; he pays them well, and the news of a man-of-war being about will have got over there before us. I saw one of their big canoes about outside ; they sail fast in a steady breeze. We must

be close off there at daybreak, or he'll be giving us the slip."

The Scotsman was right; the night, fortunately, turned out tolerably fine, and we steamed easily towards Arrowsmith Island, making a *détour* to avoid some doubtful ground, for these islands were by no means thoroughly surveyed in those days, and there were patches of coral about—the "makings" of future islands, if the world lasts long enough—perhaps ten or fifteen feet under the surface; very easily discerned from aloft in daylight, by reason of the brilliant light green of the water, but very dangerous at night.

Saunders knew his way about, and we were close off the island at four o'clock. There is only one entrance to the lagoon, and the anchorage is nine or ten miles up, so we hoped to blockade him in time.

Just at break of day, however, came one of those thick rain-squalls which had so baffled us off Bonham Island, completely obscuring everything.

"We must get farther ahead, sir," said Saunders: "farther to the eastward—we're not fairly off the entrance yet, and this wind'll serve him; he'll bear away east when she clears the reef."

So we steamed cautiously ahead in the twilight, the wind whistling through the rigging, and the drenching rain driving fiercely aslant.

"Sail right ahead, sir!" came from forward; no need for further speech—we all saw her plainly: a smart schooner, with raking masts, flying close across our bows, almost buried with the press of sail she carried, her lee rail under, the wet canvas strained as taut as a drum-head. In the old sailing days, what a romantic incident this would have been! The flying schooner would have hauled her wind, and before we could get our sails set and trimmed, she would have got well to windward of us, almost out of gunshot—we all know dozens of such stories.

Steam, however, spoils all this kind of thing; the schooner, even as we watched her, kept hard away and vanished in the thick rain with sheets eased off.

The Frenchman danced about like a maniac :

"My schoonare ! My schoonare !" he shouted : "that is my ship, capitaine."

"All right, all right," said the captain, putting the engine room telegraph "ahead," "keep your hair on—we'll soon catch him up."

As, of course, we did : the wind presently dropped, the rain ceased, and there was our friend, with his sails barely distended. We had been an hour or two too early for him.

We steamed close up alongside her, and the captain hailed, very quietly—no bawling through a speaking trumpet.

"Schooner there ! Heave to, at once, and I'll send a boat on board."

"Why should I heave to?" answered a truculent-looking ruffian in a red shirt ; "I'm an American subject."

"You'll heave to because I tell you," said the captain ; "and I'll tell you why afterwards. You had better be smart about it, too. Lower your foresail and haul your staysail-sheet to windward in two minutes, or I'll fire into you."

The crew, all listening, obeyed in a hurry. Our skipper's voice had a convincing ring about it, and they did not wait for orders from Red-shirt.

An armed boat's crew was ready, and they shoved off in a minute or two.

"Don't try any pranks with the boat," shouted our captain, "or I'll sink you."

Hurst, the second lieutenant, went in the boat, and was on deck in no time.

"Bow men hold on," he said, "the remainder on deck. Now," turning to Red-shirt, "fall all your men in on the other side. No one moves without permission of my officer, or he'll be shot."

There were seven or eight men on board, and they fell in obediently, the midshipman of the boat facing them with eight armed men.

"Your papers?" said Hurst ; "are they below? Fetch them up, please."

"What's your business with my papers?" asked the man; "this is an American ship."

"Well, I'm going to have them; so don't you think you had better get them at once, and save time?"

Then the papers were produced—American papers from Samoa, and a bill of sale for the schooner, signed apparently by the Frenchman himself!

Hurst whistled, raising his eyebrows.

"You had better come on board with me," he said; "man the boat."

So aboard came Red-shirt, and stood aside while Hurst told the captain all about it. The Frenchman, dancing with impatience, stood by, scowling at Red-shirt. The captain beckoned him below, and they both reappeared in a minute or two; the captain held a slip of paper, which he showed to Red-shirt, pointing at the same time to the signature to the bill of sale; the thing was obviously a forgery, the two signatures differing wildly.

"You are in unlawful possession of this gentleman's vessel," said the captain. "Are you placed there by Captain Frost?"

But here we came up against a dead wall. The ruffian, with an extraordinarily courageous aspect, absolutely refused to answer any questions. He would not say how he came into possession of the schooner, or where Bunker Frost was, or anything else.

"You know," said the captain, "you are concerned in an act of piracy. It may be well for you to give me information; you are liable to be hanged."

"I'll tell nothing. If I swing, I swing; but I'll tell nothing," was the surly reply.

"You are my prisoner," said the captain. "You can send on board for anything you want. I'm going to tow the schooner back to Arrowsmith, and restore her to her owner; then your men will come on board of my ship."

This was done accordingly. The pirate and his men were carefully searched, but he was the only one who was armed—with a brace of revolvers. The men were thoroughly fright-

ened, but they all swore, almost on their knees, that they did not know where Frost had gone, though they acknowledged that they belonged to his craft, by name *Dinorah*. They were evidently more afraid of their skipper than of anybody or anything else.

Away we went under steam and sail to Mulgrave Island, sixty miles away to the south-east. Plenty of complaints here against Frost, but no knowledge of his movements.

"I should try Ebon Island," said Saunders; "it's a favourite anchorage of his, and you may get him there when he's diddled by the tide. It's a queer place to get in or out of sometimes."

So off we went, with a fair wind, south-west for Ebon Island, about 150 miles distant; the captain was loath to keep on using coal, so stopped the engines, but the wind fell light, and by noon observations next day we found that an adverse current had greatly retarded us, and put on steam again.

On the following morning, when the mastheadman went aloft at broad daylight, he immediately reported, "Sail on the port bow, sir!"

Ebon was now in sight, and the stranger was apparently steering for it, his course converging upon ours. The signalman was sent aloft with his glass to report upon her.

"She's a large brig, sir, under all plain sail."

"That sounds like our friend Bunker," said the captain; "you know his craft, I suppose, Mr. Saunders?"

"Right well, sir. In a very little while I'll tell you for certain."

Our course was slightly altered to cut off the brig, and under our steam we neared her rapidly.

"That's the *Dinorah* right enough," said Saunders; "he's trying to catch the tide at Ebon. It runs out like a sluice on the ebb. He'll scarcely think you'll take your ship in there; he doesn't know I'm aboard."

There was a nice sailing breeze, and the brig was evidently travelling very fast, but had the wind too much on the beam to carry any except her foretopmast studdingsail—we were under topgallantsails and courses.

"We shall nick him before he gets in," said the captain; and this appeared probable.

We were soon within easy gunshot of him, and hoisting our colours, fired a blank charge. No notice was taken of this.

Suddenly there was a commotion below—a bumping in the engine-room, followed by the stoppage of the screw, and a lot of steam came up the engine-room gratings before the mainmast.

"That's nice," said the captain: and before he had done speaking, the first lieutenant was running down to find out what was wrong.

"Cylinder cover cracked, sir," he said, coming up again: "take twenty-four hours to replace it."

"Anybody damaged?"

"One man, slightly, sir—the doctor is looking after him."

"Well—this is an old-fashioned chase," said the captain. "Set the royals and topmast stun'sail, and round in a bit. Mr. Hurst, get the foremost pivot gun's crew up, and try and wing him—we must not let this fellow have the laugh of us."

Hurst was gunnery lieutenant, and a very good shot with anything in the shape of a gun. Everybody came on deck in a great state of excitement.

Our guns were 64 pounders—rifled guns, converted from smooth bores on Palliser's system—nothing much in the way of fighting weapons, but good enough to fire at a pirate brig!

The pivot gun was quickly trained and loaded, and Hurst took the trigger lanyard—a quick look along the sights, and he fired. Every glass was on the brig; the shot fell short, and bounding up again, as rifled shot will, it apparently flew right over the vessel, splashing again beyond her.

Raising the sight, Hurst fired again, and there was an immediate exclamation from the people with spy-glasses.

"It went clean through her mainsail," said the captain; "tell Mr. Hurst to try the same range again."

Before our gun was ready, there was a surprise: a puff of smoke from the brig's stern, followed by the hum of a shot close by us—a rifled shot, too, though much lighter than ours.

"Bravo!" said the captain, rubbing his hands: "this is excellent; he's got a good stomach, that fellow."

Hurst banged away, and made good shooting, for he always went through a sail—but a mast is a very narrow object to hit, and somehow the brig's escaped, though her main gaff came down. Her shooting was poor, only one shot telling on our foresail; but we were losing ground, and the island was getting rapidly nearer.

"You'll have to haul off soon," said Saunders: "it's not safe for you to get too close, with no steam."

"What about the brig?" asked the captain: "can she get in?"

"It's all she will—the wind's pretty fair, but the tide'll be running out very strong in another half-hour. If any man can do it, Frost can."

"What if she grounds in the passage?"

"She'll have her bottom torn out of her—sharp coral rock shelving down each side, and deep water in mid-channel. It's a queer place; there's no other island like it; just one little narrow spout to that big lagoon, and a rise and fall of fifteen feet."

We could now see the passage plainly with our glasses; there was not much swell, and the surf on either side was very moderate.

"Ah, that's got her!" said the captain, as the brig's main-topgallantmast came down; but she was already bearing up for the entrance, having left us considerably.

"You must round to in a few minutes, sir," said Saunders: "the wind's setting you on, and there's no bottom to anchor."

"Well, say the word, pilot—I want to get in as close as possible, if only to see what happens to the brig."

The men were sent to their stations, ready for handling the sails. We were about a mile from the passage as the brig entered it.

"Down with the helm, please, sir—I'll no take ye closer," said Saunders; and round came our ship, sail being reduced to topsails, and the yards braced sharp up. All hands mustered

along the lee side to watch the brig—the men from the schooner included, for it was not considered necessary to make them close prisoners at sea.

The brig faced the rushing tide bravely, steering in as straight as a line; but the worst was to come, and as she entered the narrow neck of the passage, she yawed slightly—they were losing command of her. You can steer a vessel in a tideway, as long as she stems the stream at all; but it is steering with a difference. The effect of the rudder is always, of course, to swing the stern round: when the ship has plenty of way over the ground, the actual result is that her bow follows round; when she is almost stationary over the ground, in a tideway, she only wags her stern, as it were, in response to the helm.

"He'll never do it!" said Saunders, who had borrowed the signalman's glass; "his only chance is to anchor, and it's a bad bottom—clean scoured rock mostly—there she goes over."

There was a general exclamation along the ship; the brig had suddenly yawed sharply to port, and heeled at a great angle over to that side.

"There goes his anchor—but it's too late; he'll be swept right out with a big hole in his bows, I'll warrant!"

He was right. The brig swung off again from the rocks, righting as she did so; the wind was failing, the anchor found no hold on the clean-swept, rocky bottom; and in another minute the fierce stream was sweeping her out again, almost broadside on, her bow sometimes dragging along the side, as the sails forced her over.

Out she came; and then, as she cleared the passage, and swung broadside on to us, it was plain that she was rapidly settling by the head.

"There's nigh a hundred fathoms where she is now," said Saunders.

"Call away both seaboats' crews!" cried the captain: "she's sinking, by Jove!"

"Better hoist out the pinnace, sir?" said the first lieutenant.

"Yes, do—be smart!"

Our men were smart enough, and the two cutters were



From a drawing by J. Fraser.

THE END OF BUNKER FROST.

"One solitary figure remained on the taffrail."



racing for the brig in double quick time, while the remainder of the hands cleared away the pinnacle, which was stowed inside the launch, before the mainmast, and got the tackles ready.

The brig's forecastle was now almost flush with the water, her stern lifted up, and we could see her crew desperately trying to get out the long-boat; she only carried one small boat outside, quite insufficient to hold her rather numerous crew.

As our boats approached they ceased their efforts, and clustered on the stern, ready to jump in.

One cutter went alongside on each quarter, and the brig's men clambered down by ropes' ends—there was a good load for each boat; but the sea was smooth, and the pinnacle, now in the water, was not really needed.

One solitary figure remained on the taffrail—the brig was in the last throes, heeling over, and on the point of sinking.

"Now then, captain," cried Hurst, who was in the first cutter, "look sharp, we can't hang on here!"

There was no response, either by word or gesture: Frost, a tall, athletic, splendidly handsome man, stood silent on his sinking craft, looking steadily towards the bow, with the sea creeping up rapidly towards him.

"Shove off!" said Hurst, "we'll pick him up when she goes from under him."

None of the crew spoke to their captain, or begged him to jump; sullenly they looked on, apparently unconcerned as to his fate.

The brig gave a great wallow, partially righted with a jerk, then dived head foremost into a hundred fathoms.

As the stern flung up, there was a sharp report. Bunker Frost had cheated the gallows, placing a pistol to his head, and his dead body, pitching heavily forward with the steep inclination of the vessel, became entangled in the gear on deck, and went to the bottom with his ship.

THE BALACLAVA STORM

BALACLAVA is chiefly famous for the charge of the Light Brigade. Tennyson wrote a poem about it, which, for all I know, some of you may have had to "get up" for a school recital. I know I had, but that is a great many years ago.

There were many seamen, however, probably a good number of them are yet alive, who were lads at the time, in whose recollection the name of Balaclava recalled a terrible scene at the anchorage, outside the small harbour.

Here, at the commencement of the winter, in 1854, lay a large number of vessels—men-of-war, transports, and ships laden with various stores; some steamships, others sailing vessels—more than thirty of them in all. The anchorage is not a very good one, the depth of water being greater than seamen usually care to anchor in—thirty to forty fathoms (from 180 to 240 feet)—but the harbour of Balaclava, a snug little place enough, is too small to admit a great number of vessels, and so there really was not much choice; though people at home, who thought they knew all about it, but had no responsibility in the matter, said afterwards that it was very wrong to have so many ships anchored on a lee shore, with no protection.

The Black Sea is a pretty stormy place in the winter, and south-west gales are usually the worst, which is bad for ships lying in Balaclava Bay, as it blows right on shore, coming with full weight across the whole breath of the Black Sea—something like two hundred and fifty miles.

Captain Lewis, in command of the sailing transport *Resolute*, with a valuable cargo of government stores aboard, was ordered,

with one or two other vessels, out of the harbour in the beginning of November, to anchor in the Bay ; and we are told in one account that he remonstrated strongly with the British naval authorities, pointing out the danger of this outer anchorage in case of a south-west gale ; however, out he had to go, for some reason connected with an attack upon the Russians ; and, in any case, there certainly was not room for all these vessels in the little harbour.

On the 13th of November the barometer fell very rapidly, and the weather looked extremely ugly ; but if the vessels had then weighed their anchors and got out, I do not quite see where the sailing ships could have gone for safety. Admiral Lyons, in the *Agamemnon*, did quit, however, before dark on the 13th, leaving the *Retribution*, *Vulcan*, *Niger*, and *Vesuvius*, all steam men-of-war, behind. Besides these, there were the steam-transports *Melbourne*, *Avon*, *City of London*, *Prince*, and *Hope*, and a large number of sailing vessels.

They were all prepared for bad weather, and had sent down their light masts and spars ; but no one, certainly, anticipated such a terrific storm as burst upon them early on the morning of the 14th of November.

An eye-witness thus describes it : " At daybreak, the weather being extremely dark, the wind began to rise in heavy squalls from the south-west, and in about three hours blew a perfect hurricane. The sea, which seemed to gather in a dark mass under the heavy clouds which covered the sky at dawn, was gradually lashed into the whiteness of a boiling cauldron. As each sea was heaved high into the air by the violence of the gale, its crest was swept away in thick foam over the space, and obscured the atmosphere. All idea of level, all regularity of wave appeared to be lost in the seething and boiling mass which broke with a noise of thunder on the rocks which confined and defied it. The surf, which rose to an awful height, burst every instant with a terrific roar upon the rocks, and rolled its heavy crests of spray right over the land hundreds of feet above the surface of the ocean."

In this frightful turmoil lay over thirty ships at anchor, many

of them close to one another ; and in the space of a few hours there occurred a number of awful shipwrecks, each one a dismal story in itself, each involving a terrible loss of life, and mental and bodily agonies of the most harrowing description.

The first vessel to break adrift was the *Progress*, an American ship. Both her cables parted, and in a few minutes she was dashed upon the rocky coast, and absolutely disappeared—she was ground in pieces and completely overwhelmed, in almost as little time as it takes me to tell about it. By what appears to be almost a miracle, six of the crew were washed up alive, but terribly bruised and injured ; it must be supposed that the sea hurled them on to some ledge where they were able to hold on, and climb higher up.

Then came the *Resolute*. Early in the morning her second anchor was let go, and the cables veered out to the utmost extent, in the hope that the two might hold the ship. The fearful strain on the cables, however, induced the captain to cut away the mainmast ; for the big masts and yards of a sailing vessel, with all the network of ropes and rigging, hold an enormous amount of wind.

Scarcely was this accomplished, the huge mast falling right on deck, when the starboard cable parted. The ship was being alternately thrown bodily half out of the water, and completely buried by the seas ; and the difficulty of working, or of holding on at all on deck, may be imagined. The port anchor, however, held on for a time, and the captain gave orders to cut away the other two masts : and now many of the crew were killed or maimed by this very action, for the huge spars, rolled and tossed about on deck by the tremendous motion of the ship, crushed them right and left—it was impossible to get out of the way. The force of the wind blew the men about where it would, the huge seas washed them helplessly along the deck, and the great spars were waiting for them, falling on them, rolling over on them ; and while this awful work was going on, the port cable parted on the impact of a fearful sea—she was doomed. Those who were able assembled on the poop, waiting to take their chance when

she should strike on the rocks; two were actually blown away and lost. As she struck, four more were hurled off and smashed on the rocks; the second bump broke the hull in two, and the seas rushed over it. Captain Lewis, climbing down a rope from the stern to get on shore, was crushed by the ship as she came plunging down. A few were saved, as in the other case, by good fortune in the spot where the seas pitched them, and underfoot was all that was left of the *Progress*. The *Resolute* had gone upon exactly the same spot.

Another American, the *Wanderer*, followed immediately; not a soul was saved from her.

On board the *Kenilworth*, another sailing ship, they had hopes of riding it out. Her masts had gone, but the anchors were holding bravely, when down upon her drifted a steamer, the *Avon*, and the overstrained cables gave way. On the rocks she went, on top of the other wrecks, only seven hands escaping with their lives. The breakers, terrible enough in themselves, were now rendered trebly dangerous by reason of the masts and masses of wreck, casks, chests, and all kinds of gear clashing together in the foam.

The *Prince*, a fine new screw steamer, with two anchors down and steam up, might have been expected to fare better. She had large masts, and the captain decided to cut them away. The engines had been going, to ease the strain upon the anchors, and perhaps he did not think at the moment of the risk of getting the rigging round the screw—it was, indeed, almost a certainty under the circumstances, and no sooner was the mizen-mast cut away, falling over the quarter, than the revolving screw caught and wound up loose ropes upon itself, and brought the engines up—no more help from the steam. The anchors? The port cable parted, the starboard anchor dragged along the bottom—no hope for the ship. The captain told his men he had done all he could, and they must take their chance. They discarded their heavier clothing and awaited the awful moment. The sea at this time—about 9.30 a.m.—was at its worst, and each man must have realised

that his chances of life were small indeed, that his sands were nearly run out.

On the rocks she went, a brand-new iron steamer of the best construction of those days. She might as well have been glass; five or six times she crashed down with the seas, then broke in two, and was torn in fragments, only seven out of one hundred and fifty being saved.

Two other sailing ships, the *Panola* and the *Rip Van Winkle*, speedily followed, and were lost with all hands.

Meanwhile, what about the men-of-war, and the other steamers? The *Retribution*, a paddle-wheel frigate, had lost her rudder. It is not stated how this came about; unless she had fouled some other ship with her stern, while pitching heavily, I do not see why she should have lost it; but her cables held on. The *Vesuvius* had lost her mainmast, but her anchors held, while the *Niger*, a screw vessel of considerable power, steaming to her anchors, kept her masts and came through all right; the *Vulcan*, another man-of-war did likewise—she was full of Russian prisoners. The *Melbourne* had her screw disabled by fallen rigging, but she held on; while the *City of London*, a solitary instance, fired up her boilers, slipped her cables, and made her way out against the tempest, “after incredible escapes.”

The *Avon* tried to do the same, but she had not as much power, perhaps; after getting out a little way, they lost command of her, and she fell off broadside on to the wind and sea, and the engines being stopped, drifted shorewards with fearful rapidity. In vain they attempted to get her head round, and driving in, broadside on, she sealed the fate of the unfortunate *Kenilworth*, sending her on the rocks. Again she was got round head to wind, an anchor having been let go; the second cable was slipped, and once more she breasted the seas under steam, the safety-valve having been extra weighted to give a higher pressure in the boilers. But it was no use: soon she fell off again, and it now became evident that, do what they would, they could not get out of the bay. She drifted in helplessly, the terrific seas sweeping her deck,

in danger every moment of fouling some other vessel, and with the prospect of certain destruction on the rocks. The mainmast was cut away, smashing two boats ; but she refused to answer her helm, drifting quickly to her fate.

Then the captain determined upon a desperate measure. The entrance to the little harbour could be dimly seen in the foam which flew across it ; he would try to run her in there. The entrance is barely 250 yards across, and the rocks awaited them upon either hand ; but after all, they would be no worse off, and so the engines were put astern, to bring her round stern to wind ; then, at full speed ahead, she was rushed before the racing seas for the haven, just clearing the *Melbourne*, and knocking the jib-boom out of the *Vesuvius*. With the help of a slight shift of wind in a squall, she actually got in safe—a most wonderful escape !

Inside the harbour, small as it is, and almost completely surrounded by high land, the ships were being blown about, cannoning against each other, damaging wharves, losing anchors, etc. ; the *Avon* ran against one as she came tearing in before the gale.

About one o'clock the wind moderated somewhat, but the tale of disaster was not yet complete.

The *Wild Wave*, a sailing vessel, had held on hitherto ; but at two o'clock she commenced to drift, dragging her anchors. Her crew got into a lifeboat, but the captain, the mate, and a boy refused to leave the ship. "The anchors slowly dragged until nearly three o'clock, when the ship struck. It was a melancholy and fearful sight to witness. The vessel was perfectly preserved until that moment, notwithstanding the seas which dashed her high into the air, then buried her. She was so strong, yet so light, that her masts remained firm in her, and one boom only was swinging in the wind. The three unfortunate hands might be seen on the poop holding life-buoys in their hands, and watching the opportunity to escape as the ship struck, whilst all round them the sea was lashed into a grey foam, and covered with the fragments of the previous wrecks. The *Wild Wave* did not, however, break

like her predecessors. Her anchor chains not having parted, she was dragged back to sea by their pressure after she had struck, and it was not until she had bumped about a dozen times that she seemed to come so close on that the crew could jump on the face of the rocks. One man was now observed to jump clear; he scrambled away like a wild cat. The second followed almost instantly, but with less agility, and the surf caught him, literally crushing him on the rocks. The third poor fellow fell between the ship and the shore, and was killed almost instantly. The waves then made a clean sweep over the deck of the wretched vessel. Masses of barrels were seen rushing from under the sides, and in a few moments there was not a trace left of the *Wild Wave*."

Such were some of the dreadful scenes off Balaclava. Farther to the north, off the mouth of the River Katscha, not far from Sebastopol, some of our men-of-war were lying, in a position fully as exposed as that in Balaclava Bay, as well as some transports. Thirteen vessels blew on shore, only one of which, the transport *Lord Raglan*, was got off again, her captain having cleverly managed to run her head on to the beach, which was sandy. Admiral Kennedy, then a midshipman on board the *Rodney*, a two-decker, says :

"We expected our turn to come every moment, and preparations were made to cut away the masts should it be necessary. A mountainous sea was running; line-of-battle-ships pitching bows under, with their rudders clean out of water, and straining at their cables, which tautened out fathoms ahead. We shipped one sea over the bows which swept aft and flooded the captain's cabin. Close by us on the starboard side was a large transport crowded with women and children, whose cries for help could plainly be heard, but no help could be given them; however, the ship rode out the gale. The *Sampson*, a paddle-wheel frigate, was steaming ahead at her anchors, when two merchant ships drifted down on her, totally dismasting her; but she held on, and the two went ashore, leaving the *Sampson* a wreck. . . . As soon as the gale abated, we devoted our attention to the ships on shore,

each ship sending one or more boats to their assistance. It was not much that we could do, beyond saving the crews ; but the proceedings were enlivened by the Cossacks, who amused themselves by firing on us from the cliffs overhead, until some shells from the inshore squadron dispersed them.

"While employed on this duty, Purvis and I had a narrow escape of being blown up. We were on board the *Ganges* transport saving what we could out of her, when we discovered her to be on fire. As the cargo consisted of gunpowder and spirits, we lost no time in getting our men into the boat. Some of the men had broached the cargo, and were drunk, and we had some difficulty in finding them. At last we got them all but one, when we were obliged to shove off from the ship, as the flames were bursting through her sides, and it was too hot to remain alongside. Still no sign of the missing man, when at last he appeared through the smoke, fairly sober, so we hailed him to jump overboard, and we fished him up and gave way as hard as we could. We had not gone more than a couple of hundred yards when the ship blew up with a terrific explosion, her spars and burning timber falling into the water around us."

Such are some of the dangers to which seamen are exposed when at anchor, and within the comparatively narrow waters of the Mediterranean. There were thirty-four ships lost in the storm, and the number of lives sacrificed cannot be stated, while each wreck was alone a terrible tragedy, which many brave men were compelled to witness, without the possibility of affording any assistance.

A STORY OF A PIG

(Mr. Charles Loftus, in his book "My Youth by Sea and Land," relates the following incident as an actual fact: it took place at Bermuda.)

ONE of my messmates, who is now, alas! poor fellow, no more, was in the harbour of St. George's in a small prize schooner,* and as we were what is called old cronies, I went on board his vessel to spend the day with him, and he was glad enough to see me. He had plenty of good things on board his craft, of which he was the prize-master. It was agreed that we could not do better than dine on board. Accordingly we made preparations for a good blow-out. I went to the best hotel and bought a couple of bottles of wine and some porter. The latter article I purchased at the enormous price of half-a-crown a bottle, but what was half-a-crown to a midy in those days, flush of prize money?—and Barclay's brown stout was not a luxury to be had every day in the Island of Bermuda. The vessel we had captured was a schooner of about two hundred tons, loaded with all sorts of merchandise, which had been sent in about a week before our arrival. Those who are acquainted with the situation of the harbour know that there is good anchorage. Vessels can lie close to the shore, and are sheltered on both sides from the wind and sea.

The vessel which I was aboard of was lying alongside another prize of ours, a brig, and around us was a cluster of some twenty vessels of different sorts, prizes to the various men-of-war on the station, which had been sent in to be condemned.

* During the American War of 1812.

Just as we had set ourselves down to enjoy our dinner, which consisted of a famous piece of boiled beef, two good chickens, and some boiled yams in the place of potatoes, with a bottle of sherry on one side and a ditto of Barclay's stout on the other, our ears were saluted with a most extraordinary sound from the shore, and, going on deck, we beheld a scene so ludicrous that I fear I shall be unable to give any adequate description of it, but which I am sure I shall never forget. Running to the side of the vessel nearest the shore, we saw five or six black fellows dancing, jumping, cutting all sorts of capers, and shouting to their companions farther up the street. Amidst the shouts from the shore there was mingled a strange sound, apparently proceeding from some animal in the water. What could it be? A few words will suffice to tell. The crews on board the various vessels in the harbour caused a very large daily consumption of meat, bread, biscuit, vegetables, oranges, pineapples, yams, etc., and consequently a good deal of refuse was thrown overboard every day, which found its way to the beach. There was a gentleman of colour who, allured by the profit to be obtained from the sale of those noble animals called pigs, thought he might diminish the cost of keeping them by driving them down to the shore, where they in general found amusement by picking up the cabbage-stocks, leaves, and other refuse floating on shore from the vessels in the harbour. This had not passed unobserved among the crews of the different prize-vessels clustered together, and a plan was laid to capture one of the grunTERS, and, if possible, derive some amusement from him.

Accordingly, having inserted a large cod-hook into the middle of each of two or three cabbages, and attached a long and strong line to them, the cabbages were placed in such a position that they *must* float on shore. The cords were veered away and allowed to remain loose until the time when it would be found necessary to haul them taut.

The pigs, as usual, were driven down about a score at a time, and were busy at work running about the shore, picking up occasionally dainty bits from the refuse in which they were

revelling. One of the largest pigs was at length observed biting at one of the cabbages with which the hooks were baited, and when it was seen that he had got the hook fairly into his mouth, the men gave a dexterous jerk with the line, and fairly hooked him through the side of his jaw. Every one who knows what a shindy a pig makes when he is at all hurt will not be surprised when I state that this poor animal at once announced his misfortune by the most awful shrieks, which became perfect yells of despair when those on board began to haul away at the line. The astonishment of Master Sambo, the keeper of the pigs, when he saw one of his herd drawn by some invisible power through the water, may, as the penny-a-liners say, be better imagined than described. He jumped about, shouting with all his might to his companions:

"Golla, lookee there! Golla, what de matter be? Neber see the like afore! Neber see pig take water like a dog! Hilloa, Jack! Hilloa, Bob! Come here! Golla, him gone mad! See, him gone down! No—dere he be again! Ah nebber—no nebber see de like!"

All this time piggy was gradually, much against his will, making his way off to the brig, which lay ahead of us, and of which we had a full view from the position in which we lay. Arrived alongside, he was quickly hauled on board, a sight at which I verily thought Sambo would have expired. He danced up and down, and pulled his woolly head, exclaiming, loud enough to be heard a mile off:

"Nebber see de like! What will massa say? Golla! Him say my fault."

"You d——d black fool!" bawled out a gruff, short, stout man, dressed in a white jacket and broad-brimmed straw hat. "What do you stand jabbering at there? Don't you see what is the matter?"

"Yes, me do see; me no black fool, massa; me see piggy go on board. You nebber see dat before. You be d——d clebber, you be; you nebber see dat before, I say."

"Hold your black jaw, you woolly-headed nigger, do!"

"No nigger. What you mean? Me no black nigger."

"Well, then, you white one."

The sea-beach by this time was crowded with black and white people trying to make out what the shindy was about. The man who had just addressed Sambo happened to be the captain of one of the prizes, a true-blooded Yankee, and, having been on shore by permission, was coming down to embark when he witnessed all that had occurred. From his natural dislike to his captors, he was only too delighted at any opportunity of bringing them into trouble.

"Don't you know what has happened, you fool?" he again bellowed out. "Don't you see that those Britishers have kidnapped your pig, and got him aboard the brig?"

"He, what you say? Eh, what you say? Golla, nebber heard dat afore! Say dat again, massa."

"Psha! don't you see those fellows on board the brig have hauled off your pig? Go on board, you fool, and demand the animal."

No sooner was this light thrown upon the subject than Sambo and five or six others jumped into a boat and shoved off, a few strokes of the oars bringing them alongside. They were allowed to come on board, but their search was a fruitless one. All said that no pig had ever been near their vessel, and pretended the utmost ignorance of the whole affair. They had heard, they said, a great noise on shore, and had seen a pig plunge into the water, but what had become of him they knew not, and wondered how any one could imagine that a pig could swim off and get on board their ship; they knew nothing about it. Poor Sambo was so perplexed that he could only suppose the "debbil" had got into his pig, a view of the case which might not satisfy his master.

The fact was that the pig was no sooner hoisted on board than he was knocked on the head, slung between a couple of iron crow-bars, gently lowered over the side until he reached the bottom, and the rope so secured as almost to defy observation. In fact, the search which took place on the following morning by order of the magistrate (for formal

complaint had been made) ended in smoke. Not the slightest vestige of the pig could be found—a circumstance which convinced Sambo and his companions that the mysterious disappearance was, as they had at first imagined, the work of the Evil One; but they went away fully resolved never to let their pigs feed along the shore again.

As for the Yankee skipper, he vowed that it was a "tarnation, shameful piece of plunder," that the Britishers were the greatest pirates, both by sea and land, and tried all in his power to make the matter more serious than it really was. The affair soon reached the ears of the captains and officers of the different ships and of the garrison, and many were the jokes passed round.

As for the owner of the lost pig, he was so worked on by the Yankee captain that he became furious, and swore eternal hatred against all midshipmen and men-of-war's men, vowing that before he died he would be avenged upon them in some way or another.

An order was sent by the admiral to examine into the matter, as a charge was brought against the officer and crew of the vessel in which piggy had been forcibly embarked, and a constable, with a search warrant from the chief magistrate, came on board, but nothing was ever made out of it. Piggy lay very snug at the bottom of the harbour, under the vessel's bows, where no one ever thought of looking for him. All the men on board declared most solemnly that the whole story was a fabrication of the black pig-driver, who, having lost an animal, wanted to lay the charge of theft on their shoulders, and they declared that "twenty pigs might have gone into the water for all they knew; and it was very hard that they should be accused of *stealing* one because it had done so."

Although the pig had been palpably seen to go over the brig's side, yet no one could swear who had hauled him on board. So there the matter ended; but it caused much amusement for some time afterwards, and was a good joke at the governor's house, at the admiral's table, in the middies' berth, and in the cockpit of every ship at Bermuda.

THE LOSS OF THE "CHARLES BARING"

THE *Charles Baring* was originally a Spanish corvette; captured by an English man-of-war, she was sold to a mercantile firm, and employed in the West India trade. Like many such vessels captured by us, she was of inferior build, not sufficiently stiff in construction, and when exposed to bad weather, with a full cargo on board, she strained so as to open her seams and leak pretty freely.

This weakness eventually brought about her destruction, with considerable loss of life.

She left Port Royal, Jamaica, on the 6th of September, 1800, bound for London, and by the 19th she had got through the Windward Passage, between the islands of Cuba and St. Domingo, and continued her voyage northward, with some slight mishaps, such as usually occur on a voyage. On the 5th of October, however, a heavy gale was encountered, which carried away some spars and sails; but these are little accidents to which seamen are well accustomed, and which can be more or less easily made good.

Then it was discovered that, as a result of the gale, the seams had opened considerably, and the ship was rapidly making water. It was hoped at first that this was no more than could be kept under by pumping, and for a week or so this appeared to be the case; on the 15th of October, however, it was found that the water gained upon one pump, and that it was necessary to labour incessantly at both in order to gain upon it. This was a desperate state of affairs, for it must be remembered that the crew had, in addition to this constant pumping, to be handling the sails, in stormy weather, and performing all the duties of the ship.

On the 20th of October it was found that, in spite of incessant pumping, the water was steadily gaining; and at five o'clock on the morning of the 21st the captain, who, utterly worn out by days and nights of continuous watching and working on deck, had lain down for an hour or two of rest, was roused from sleep by the intelligence that there was five feet of water in the hold—still gaining.

Captain John Aris was a fine specimen of a commander, not easily daunted. He immediately gave orders that a hole should be cut on each side of the main deck, near the main-mast, and while the carpenters were thus occupied, he had two casks prepared, taking out one end, and slinging them so that they could be hoisted and lowered into the well of the ship—they formed, in fact, two huge dippers, or bailers, lowered down, tilted over in the water, then hoisted up rapidly and emptied down the scuppers.

This new device was worked by the crew with such goodwill that the casks came up full every few seconds, and, together with the pumps, they actually reduced the water in the hold to little more than two feet—but it was very hard work, and how long they could have kept it up at that rate seems very uncertain.

Then came more bad news. The coffee and cocoa in the hold was washed loose, and got into the pumps, choking them almost entirely, so that the amount of water they threw was very trifling. But the crew worked away heroically all night, and when, in the morning, the captain ordered the guns to be thrown overboard to ease the ship, the passengers came to the front and, directed by the captain and some of the crew, performed this important act.

Unhappily, it was of no avail; the pumps became entirely useless, the water increased to seven feet. The men who were thus freed from labour at the pumps were sent to clear the forehold and throw the cargo overboard, for the ship was evidently settling by the head; and by six o'clock in the morning of the 23rd of October they had so far succeeded that two casks could be used for bailing this portion of the ship

as well ; though this fact is sufficient to show what a quantity of water there was in her.

However, they actually reduced it to some extent ; hope revived somewhat ; if they could only keep it up, they might possibly keep the ship afloat. They were not going to acknowledge themselves beaten yet, though most of them must have felt that it could only end in one way—the ship would go down under their feet. Still they bailed and bailed furiously ; then came the extinction of all hope.

The wind, which, though boisterous, had been fair for some days, chopped round to north-east, and increased to a hard gale. By 8 p.m. they were obliged to lie to ; and think of all the work to be done, in reducing sail, etc., with so many hands desperately bailing all the time. By midnight it blew so hard that the ship lay over at too great an angle to admit of the possibility of bailing any longer with the casks. The ship was doomed : and so worn out were the crew by their incessant labour, that to many of them the prospect of death had lost most of its terrors ; they felt as if they could lie down and welcome it.

The gale increased ; at break of day the mainmast crashed over the side, and the weary crew with great difficulty cut the wreck clear. Daylight only brought the certainty of death to many, for there were only two boats, which could not hold half of the fifty-five persons on board. There was no selfish panic or confusion, however : the captain set a good example, and his crew, to their great credit, imitated him.

The boats were hoisted out, and the first care of the captain and crew was to get the four lady passengers into the long-boat—a difficult matter in the heavy sea which was running, but it was accomplished without accident. A compass and quadrant, water and provisions, and a sail were passed into the boat, and she was veered astern.

Then the captain spoke to his men, quite calmly, pointing out to them that it was impossible that they could all be saved in the boats, and that the best chance was to construct a large raft of spare spars, cotton bales, etc., and endeavour to keep afloat upon it until some vessel should pick them up ; he

promised that the boats should stand by the raft ; meanwhile they must stick to the ship, and he would stick to them, as long as she would float, or until the raft was ready.

The crew responded very nobly. They agreed to stick to the captain, and obey him without question, to the end—the end, which they all felt was so near—and it is impossible not to admire the courage and loyalty of these men, with their ship sinking under them, or the fine character of the captain, which must have induced them to trust him so entirely.

The raft was immediately commenced with a will—and while it was in progress, a passenger, Mr. Bennett, who had got safely into the long-boat, called to the captain to join them, as the ship was on the point of sinking : but Captain Aris refused ; he was not, he said, going to quit his ship as long as she remained afloat.

He had not long to wait. The raft was nearing completion. Another hour would have sufficed, though it is exceedingly improbable that, in a heavy sea, it would have been the means of saving life ; but it was not given the chance. The last moment came, the ship reeled and lurched helplessly, her bows went down, and in a few moments she had gone from under them, the captain, as she disappeared, jumping overboard, and with great difficulty reaching the long-boat, which had been cast adrift just before.

The jolly-boat, with two or three men, who were trying to pick up some of the hapless swimmers, was thrown foul of the long-boat by a sea, and foundered immediately ; some of the crew were taken into the already crowded long-boat, others went down with the wreck.

There were eight-and-twenty in the long-boat—a heavy load for her even in calm weather ; and it was only by constant exertions that they could keep her afloat. A seaman, named Abraham Day, who was steering the boat with an oar, suddenly cried out that a big sea was approaching, which must swamp the boat ; and every one felt, as it approached, that this must be the end of all ; but, though filled almost to the gunwale, the boat held on. Luckily some one had had the

foresight to throw in two or three buckets, so that they bailed rapidly with these, and their hats—anything that came handy—and got the water out; but they were compelled also to heave overboard most of the water and provisions, and were reduced to a small quantity of sea-soaked biscuit, and sufficient water to afford a couple of wine-glasses full each in the twenty-four hours.

Every sea appeared likely to swamp the overladen boat. They were wet through and bitterly cold; and it was impossible to attempt to make the land, as the boat could only be kept before the wind. Indeed, the nearest land, the Azores Islands, was about four hundred and fifty miles distant, and it did not seem at all likely that they could be saved. Still Captain Aris, with unfailing fortitude and cheerfulness, encouraged and cheered them; and after three days and three nights of misery, they came across the American brig *Harriett*, of New York, bound for Bristol.

The crew of this vessel were already upon short allowance, having so far made a very bad passage; but they shared their scanty store with the castaways, and did their best for them, landing them at Kinsale, in Ireland, on the 6th of November.

The ladies all survived the hardships of the boat voyage; but one passenger, General le Grand, died after two days on board the brig—his wife was with him. General Beauvais, whose wife and two daughters made up the four ladies in the boat, sank with the wreck. Perhaps he was unable to swim. At any rate, he does not appear to have attempted to get into the long-boat; and when the jolly-boat was stove and swamped all hope was lost; but his wife and daughters could see him on the ship as she went down; and, unable to make them hear, it is stated that he waved his sword three times over his head. One is disposed to wonder what he was doing with his sword at such a moment; but it may be true. Anyhow, he met his fate like a brave man; and he was in good company, for there seems to be no doubt, from the accounts of the survivors, that all behaved with admirable courage—they had done their best to save their ship, and they went down with her. Twenty-seven in all were lost.

"MISSING"

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

ONE day in January 18— a little paragraph appeared in the papers—only a few lines, and not placed in a conspicuous position. Many people, no doubt, as they glanced at the general news, and read about the football matches, overlooked it entirely. This is how it ran :

"Missing ship. The four-masted barque *Pleiades*, which left San Francisco on the 30th of April last, has been posted at Lloyd's as missing. The vessel was last spoken by the *Golden Hind*, on the 25th of May, in the South Pacific. She is a nearly new ship, on her second voyage, and thoroughly well equipped in every respect. Her owners are Messrs. Amherst & Co., of London, and she is commanded by Captain Thomsett, a most capable and experienced seaman."

"Missing"—not a very extraordinary announcement ; it has, unhappily, been applied to a great number of vessels at various times ; and few, indeed, have been accounted for out of the number, for a large margin is allowed, especially to a sailing vessel, for light and contrary winds, and so forth, before the dismal notice appears ; and this is preceded by an "overdue" period—in fact, "missing" is the final word.

The immediate result of the paragraph was the appearance of several anxious women at Messrs. Amherst's Office in Fenchurch Street, hoping for some crumb of comfort ; among them one Mrs. Winchester, a widow, whose son and daughter were on board the *Pleiades* as passengers. The lad had been prescribed a sea voyage for his health, and his sister had begged to be allowed to accompany him. They had gone in a sailing

vessel to Calcutta, thence in a steamer to China and Japan, and across to San Francisco ; then, finding that the *Pleiades* had accommodation, they had taken their passage home in her, undeterred by the warnings of acquaintances as to the discomfort of rounding Cape Horn in the winter. Young Winchester had benefited immensely by his travels, and they had thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

“ Oh, I’m not afraid,” said the lad. “ She’s a fine, big ship, and we’re not given to being seasick ; Virginia’s a better sailor than I am, if anything.”

And Virginia, too, had laughed at the croakers.

“ You’ll maybe have a precious rough time, young lady,” said Captain Thomsett, regarding her with a fatherly smile, for he had a bonny daughter waiting for him at home.

“ Oh, I’m sure you’ll take good care of us, captain,” she said, “ and I do love a ‘ wind-jammer ’—far better than those humdrum old steamers.”

And so they sailed, and were presently reported at Callao by the *Golden Hind*—after that, a blank : and in due course the insurance was paid on the vessel, her fate remaining a mystery.

What had happened to her ?

Exchanging the blue skies and sunny seas of the Pacific for the boisterous region of the high south latitudes, they had certainly had a rough time. There were days when there was nothing for it but to lie in their bunks and try to read by the oil-lamps—days when Captain Thomsett and his crew were dragging on ropes, up to their knees in salt water, the few scraps of wet canvas straining and tearing at sheets and spars, the roaring, milelong seas pursuing the ship relentlessly, rearing their giant crests over her quarter, and sometimes crashing on board, and washing the men about the decks like so much lumber. And once or twice, at night, the *Aurora Australis* had flooded the heavens almost to the zenith with great surging waves of crimson light, tinging blood-red the crests and hollows of the tremendous seas—a grand and solemn spectacle.

But the ship was staunch and sound, and well-found aloft ; and they had come safely and swiftly through it, passing at length into the balmy south-east trade wind, when days and nights were alike delicious, the great ship bounding along under a cloud of canvas, the Southern Cross dipping lower to the horizon day by day, reminding them that they were passing swiftly to the northern hemisphere. The men—the few Englishmen—among the crew would tell each other that “the girls at home had got hold of the tow-rope,” and quaint shanties, with the oddest words, set to a swinging tune, would sometimes come echoing aft from the great curve of the foresail, to the accompaniment of the wash of the water rushing past, and the impatient clash of the bow-wave, flying off to encounter the crests of the seas, and flinging the spray high in air.

On such a night the brother and sister were standing together by the lee bulwarks, watching the phosphorescent masses of foam, with dark islands of comparatively still water, flying past—the fascination of looking over the side of a ship, especially a sailing ship, in swift motion never palls.

“We’re making tracks to-night,” said Harold ; “I wonder what she’s going—twelve ? I shan’t be sorry to get home, now ; I’m another man, altogether.”

“You are wonderful,” said the girl ; “how glad mother will be to see you looking so well ! But we have many a mile to go yet.”

“Yes ; somewhere about the middle of August before we sight the Lizard, unless we have exceptional luck. What a ripping night it is ! The skipper is making up now for all those nights out round the Horn. Going to turn in, Captain Thomsett ?”

“Yes, I think I may venture to turn in to-night,” said the captain, who had just come on deck for a look round : “going along nicely, isn’t she ? A good twelve since noon.”

He looked at the compass, cast a glance at the swelling canvas and star-lit sky, and bade his passengers good-night. It was not long before they followed, and the deck was deserted save for the officer in charge, slowly pacing to and

fro, or looking over the side ; the helmsman, intent upon the compass, and the watch of fifteen men, lounging or lying about forward, smoking, and spinning yarns. The ship sped on, encircled by the silent horizon, her sharp stem swiftly cleaving the deep indigo sea, her course controlled, mighty structure as she was, by a spoke or two of the wheel either way.

The silence was suddenly broken by an awful, soul-shaking sound—a humming, rushing noise, increasing with lightning swiftness, before the astounded crew had time to ask : “ What is it ? ” In a second or two, there was an appalling crash, an explosion as of a monster gun, a blaze of blinding fire about the bows, mingled with a cloud of salt spray which flew aloft, completely enveloping the forecastle.

The ship shook fore and aft under the shock, and immediately the foretopgallantmast, a huge spar, with the double topgallantsail and royal, broke off short, and came crashing down before the topsail ; while the subsidence of the spray revealed the fact that the great steel bowsprit, with the head sails and all the stays attached, had disappeared—all in a few seconds. What had happened ?

Struck by lightning ?

The sky was serenely clear, the stars resplendent in tropical brilliancy.

There were cries of dismay, both from those on deck, and others who had been so rudely awakened in the men’s quarters. These came rushing on deck shouting, questioning, gazing at the ruin aloft ; the ship meanwhile sailing on with reduced speed, and dragging the wreck of the bowsprit under her bows.

The second mate, appalled into speechless inaction for a moment, recovered his wits and began shouting orders :

“ Get the sail off her ! Clew up topgallantsails and royals ; bring her up until the topsails shiver. Be smart, there, lads, and get the lee braces in——”

The captain ran on deck, with visions of a collision, or an unknown rock, in his mind ; the remaining officers appeared as quickly, and all helped in shortening sail and bracing up the yards. The great ship swung round under the helm, and in a

few minutes lay close to the wind, under lower topsails alone, while the crew furled the upper sails, except those on the foremast, which hung down in dire confusion.

"Lay the maintopsail to the mast, Mr. Watson," said the captain, as he and the chief officer went forward. "What's happened to her?" he added to the latter, who had no reply ready.

They mounted the topgallant forecastle, and looked over the bows.

Had she crashed into a cliff or an iceberg in full career, the result might have been such as this—the projecting stem—the handsome, curved "head knee," which gave her such a beautiful appearance, was clean gone; the steel bowsprit was cut clean through, the whole stem opened out, jagged edges of plates projecting; the deck planks by the knightheads were charred, blackened, and splintered, and here and there were still smoking, where fragments of some nearly red-hot substance lay about. Some pieces had flown further aft; the deck was spattered with black, charred marks.

"Nice mess," said the captain. "Do you know what it is?"

"No, I don't, sir, unless——"

"A meteorite—can't be anything else. It's come clean down on her stem. Get the hands to work to clear this raffle, and tell the cook to make some coffee. We must cut away the bowsprit gear, and unshackle the bobstay, and rig out a spar for a jury bowsprit——"

"Better secure the foretopmast——"

"Yes; but that'll stand stiff enough for the present; you may clew up the lower topsail."

Leaving the forecastle the captain found the carpenter.

"Come down and look at the collision bulkhead," he said.

Down they went together, crawling through small hatches in the depths of the hull, the carpenter carrying a lantern.

The *Pleiades*, like all modern steel ships, had what is termed a "collision bulkhead," close to the bows—a strong, watertight iron partition, intended, in case of collision, to prevent the water from rushing into the other part of the ship, which

was, indeed, divided into seven or eight compartments in a similar manner.

As they crept through the hole which gave access to the inner side of the bulkhead, an ominous sound greeted their ears—the trickling of water. The strain upon the partition, as the ship still went fast ahead, was of course, tremendous, and some of the rivets had evidently started; now that her way was stopped, it was almost entirely relieved, except of the pressure due to the depth below the surface—but the damage was there, and the captain looked serious enough as they inspected it.

"Get some stuff in hand at once to shore it up," he said: "she won't make any water to speak of while she's hove to."

Harold Winchester, awakened from a sound sleep by the shock, which came about half-past three in the morning, lay for a moment or two wondering, half-asleep, what had roused him. Then he heard the second mate shouting orders, and the pattering of many feet on deck. He put on some clothes hastily, and knocked at his sister's cabin door. She, of course, was wide awake by this time:

"Harold? Is that you? What's happened?"

"I don't know; sounds like a collision. You had better get up and dress; I'm going on deck."

There was plenty to do on deck: a knot of men, aloft on the foremast, were preparing to disentangle the mass of wreckage and lower it on deck—no light job, with such heavy yards, and all the gear strong wire. The chief officer, a thorough seaman, was superintending the work; two other officers were aloft with the men—smart, capable fellows, both of them, and not readily daunted by any emergency.

The *Pleiades* had a small boiler and "donkey" engine on deck, which worked some of the winches for hauling on the ropes, and this was of great service.

"What's the matter, captain?" asked young Winchester, as the skipper reappeared from below and came aft.

"We've had a piece of shocking bad luck," said Thomsett, and then he explained, adding, "rum thing, isn't it, that this

thing, with all these thousands of miles of ocean about, should drop on to our stem?" But he said nothing just then about the damage forward.

"Is Miss Winchester frightened by the row?"

"She's dressing to come on deck; are we in any danger?"

"I'll not say we are not: I never believe in telling people everything's all right when it isn't, but we must wait for daylight before I can say anything for certain."

Daylight did not bring much encouragement; the mighty missile had cut and torn down the stem, the damage extending under the water-line, as could plainly be seen when the bow lifted to the swell; the bow plates were opened out completely above water, precisely as though the ship had been in collision, by the irresistible force of the blow, and the whole of the upper part of the stem was broken away.

For many hours the hands toiled at clearing the wreck, while the carpenter, with two or three to help him, wedged up strong wooden struts against the collision bulkhead, to prevent it from yielding further, if possible.

By two o'clock in the afternoon the wreck was cleared, and the foretopmast stayed temporarily; the foremast was stayed to the knightheads—the extreme fore-end of the topgallant fore-castle—and the only head sail that could be set was on this stay—a storm sail, reserved as a rule for heavy weather.

The captain called the hands aft, and spoke out frankly:

"The collision bulkhead is badly shaken. I'm going to run for Bahia; it's within five or six days' sail, under easy canvas, but we must be prepared for taking to the boats; I hope we shan't have to. Mr. Watson, take some hands and see all the boats watered and provisioned; plugs right, masts and sails in order. The remainder of the hands get the spare maintopsail over the bows, to take some of the strain off the bulkhead."

This was a troublesome business, and it was nearly dark by the time it was accomplished; then the yards were squared, and the ship, under lower main and mizen-topsails and foresail, was headed for Bahia.

The little party of six—the captain, three officers, and the two passengers—sat down as usual to dinner: there was nothing to interfere with that. They all looked serious, but self-controlled, and Virginia managed to keep up the credit of her sex by eating a good meal.

There was but little sleep that night for any of them, and by the morning they knew that all their efforts were in vain; the way of the ship forced the protecting canvas aside, the jagged, broken plates cut and tore it, and the bulkhead was giving, the shores yielding, in spite of the constant attention of the carpenter, who at length was forced to quit for his life.

The pumps were going constantly, but when the bulkhead gave way, they were powerless, and by noon it was apparent that the ship was slowly settling forward; the water could be heard rushing in below, nothing could stop it; the next compartment was rapidly filling; the *Pleiades* was doomed.

The wind was lighter, the sea tolerably smooth, and without any approach to panic or confusion, the boats were got out—the long-boat, yawl, and lifeboat, amply capable of holding all hands without any dangerous crowding.

“Now, Miss Winchester, you and your brother come with me in the long-boat, and keep your heart up; many a ship’s company has been in a worse pickle than this, and come safely out of it.”

“I’m not afraid, Captain Thomsett,” said the girl, regarding him with steady, serious eyes: and she spoke the truth, but her thought was of her mother—her mother, waiting for news of the ship being signalled off the Lizard.

By the time they shoved off, the bow of the ship was very low in the water; the cargo of grain, compact and heavy, and swelling rapidly with the influx of water, weighed her down. The next partition had given way to the pressure; the end was not far off.

They rowed away to a safe distance, then the masts were stepped, the sails got ready for hoisting; but they lingered to watch the last throes of the gallant vessel. The water crept up her deck; the bow disappeared completely; she reeled to

one side, then righted again, and slowly, inevitably plunged deeper. Then her stern heaved up, and with a mighty swirl of water, and a crashing and tearing of her decks, a clattering of loose gear, down she went.

The sails were hoisted, and with melancholy and foreboding hearts they steered for port. The spectacle of the miserable fate of the splendid ship was overwhelming. No one was to blame ; "the act of God," it would be called by Lloyd's people.

They never reached port. On the third night there arose one of those tropical storms, short-lived, but terrific while they last. The boats were blown and beaten under water, buried in the flying spume.

Nothing remained of the *Pleiades*, save a tangle of wreckage, floating unnoticed for months, for years, green with sea slime, rotting to pieces.

Many miles away some oars and boats' gear shared a similar fate. Nobody ever came across them ; not even a bit of plank with the ship's name upon it was picked up, not a life-buoy. The *Pleiades* was wiped out, a thing of the past, and the only story told at home was—"Missing."

NOTE.—Meteorites are masses composed of iron and some other substances (all such as are found on our planet), which have probably been projected with great force from a crater on the earth in the earlier periods of its cooling down. Passing, by the velocity of discharge, some six or seven miles a second, beyond the influence of the earth's attraction, they have for ages revolved round the sun until, crossing the path of the earth sufficiently near to come once more within its attraction, they rush upon it with tremendous speed, becoming red-hot by the friction of the atmosphere ; in the case of very small pieces, the heat will completely melt them, but larger ones reach the earth. Many instances are known of these lumps of iron falling upon the earth with such terrific force that they have dug a great hole ten or twelve feet deep, and remained still red-hot at the bottom. There are now, in the British Museum at South Kensington, several specimens, one of which weighs three and a half tons.

There have been several instances of meteorites falling into the sea quite near to ships, with a loud report, caused by the red-hot mass suddenly encountering the cold water ; if you plunge a red-hot poker into cold water, there is a sort of crisp little "snap," which is a miniature imitation of the report made by a meteorite of large size dropping into the sea.—ED.

THE LOSS OF THE "TWEED"

ON the 9th of February, 1847, the *Tweed*, belonging to the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, left Havana for Vera Cruz, in the Gulf of Mexico, a very simple voyage of about 750 miles. The *Tweed* was not, of course, anything like our modern ideas of a mail steamer; but she was a good, well-found ship for those times, and was commanded by Mr. George Parsons, who had been for many years a master in the Royal Navy, and was therefore accounted a skilled navigator. There were 62 passengers on board, and the officers and crew numbered 89, making a total of 151 persons.

The voyage, as I have said, was a simple one, all dangers being clearly marked on the chart. It was, however, the season of "Northers" in the Gulf of Mexico, and the *Tweed* was destined to be caught in one of these fierce gales. She had run about 120 miles by noon on the 10th, when the weather commenced to look dirty, no "sights" for latitude being obtained by reason of the clouds; and that night the wind shifted to the northward, blowing hard. On the 11th, at noon, the sky was still completely overcast, but the captain was pretty confident as to the position of the ship; and as it is customary, at noon, to enter in the log the bearing and distance of the nearest danger, or of some well-marked spot, it was stated that the bearing and distance of the Alacran Reef was S. 86 W., 124 miles.* This, at least, is the statement of a passenger, in a long account published in *The Times* of the 9th of April; he apparently copied it from a statement of the position of the ship, etc., which no doubt was posted up for the information

* That is to say *nearly* due west, from south to west being, of course, 90 degrees.—ED.

of the passengers. As the safe passage lay about half-way between Alacran Reef—a very dangerous spot—and the coast of Yucatan, that is, about thirty miles south of the reef, I think this position at noon on the 11th of February, if anywhere near correct, was decidedly a bad one; however, all went well until past midnight. The captain came on deck about half-past two, the weather being still very dark and stormy, and at half-past three there came from the bows that awful cry: "Breakers ahead!"

The captain and officer of the watch ran forward, and immediately the helm was ordered "hard-a-starboard," and the engines astern.

"I was awakened," says the writer in *The Times*, "by the cry of 'breakers ahead,' although not knowing fully its import; and when I heard sounds of people running hurriedly overhead, I instantly jumped out of bed, snatched up my trousers and boots, and was on deck in a very few seconds. I cast a glance to the right and left, and saw the dreaded white tops of the breakers stretching along in the gloom and darkness. The captain was amidst ships, coming aft, and was asked: 'What danger, captain?' He replied: 'Never fear, she's going astern.' He must have meant the engines, for the ship herself never did, as in a few seconds more she went crash on the reef with almost all her force, as she had been under full steam, with sail set. She went over a little to leeward (*i.e. towards* the reef) on first striking, then uprighted, and being raised by the swell, the way scarcely off her yet, she again crashed on the rocks with all her weight. This seemed fairly to dash her whole bottom in, sending the machinery, boilers, and funnel up with a jerk some inches. The engines immediately stopped of themselves, the steam escaping from the boilers, filling the engine-room, and flying up through the hatchways in a thick white cloud. There was then no hope of getting the ship off the reef, and orders were given about the sails, to prepare the lifeboats, and stand by the others. All this was the work of a few minutes. The passengers and crew now crowded on deck, some almost naked, and but few dressed. On striking the

second time, the ship swung with her port side on the reef, and then fell over to windward (*i.e.* away from the reef, so that the seas broke right upon her deck). The sea then struck her, carrying away in a moment, as if they were feathers, the cutter, mail-boat, and dinghy astern. She then reeled to leeward and back to windward, each time the timbers underneath being heard to tear, crash, and give way with a fearful grating noise. The next sea dashed away the starboard paddle-box boat.*

The scene at this time was truly awful. The night was very dark, and piercing cold. Everywhere might be seen persons clinging with all their strength, some to the masts, others to the sides, skylights, seats, boats, rigging; the sea making a breach over all. Below, where all was dark, there seemed awful disorder, the lower decks breaking up, the bulkheads, cabin furniture, etc., washing about, and screams of people in distress. It was fearful, and being without power to assist made it worse. At this time I was near the captain, and said: 'What is to be done?' He said calmly: 'Hold on till daylight if possible, as I hope she will keep together till then.' By this time the funnel, after reeling once or twice from side to side, fell over to windward, and the masts, as she reeled, were seen to shake like willows. Each moment we expected to see them go, but they held on, and the captain gave orders to cut them away, but no one had a knife at first; at last something like a penknife was got hold of, and the chief officer cut the lanyards. The captain gave orders to stand by the two remaining boats on the lee side, to preserve them from injury as the ship rolled, but not to lower them until the last moment, although by this time they were crammed full of people. It was found impossible to stand to get the lee paddle-box boat out; besides, if she could have been moved, she would have been dashed to pieces.

All this time we scarcely knew where the ship had struck. Some thought it might be the coast of Yucatan,

* Paddle-steamers at that time usually carried a large boat on each paddle-box, stowed upside down; they were not very handy to get out in case of emergency.—ED.

naturally supposing that the ship had been gradually set towards it by the fierce norther which had blown for two days ; but no land whatever was to be seen. The ship was rapidly going to pieces under our feet—a few minutes more and the destruction was complete. The ship parted before and abaft the sponsons, leaving the machinery and boilers standing on the reef. One or two seas tore the deck off the after-part of the ship, as the latter divided from the machinery. At the last moment orders were given to lower the two boats, which was done, and they drifted a little astern ; but they were without oars, it is thought, and there is no doubt that they were much damaged when swinging at the ship's side full of men. One more sea sent all the after-part of the ship, boats and all, flying in a thousand pieces, and all that remained on it were scattered in the sea. I recollect being seated, with the captain and a few others, on a part of the ship's side to which the netting was attached, with the water up to our breasts. A fearful cry was heard, and the captain said : ' Oh, those poor men in the boats ; they are gone—God have mercy on them ! ' All was still. In a moment more, it seemed as if tons of broken wood were hurled on top of us, and we were scattered and buried beneath the waves ; then came a fearful choking struggle with death."

This is a terrible picture, given by an eye-witness, who narrowly escaped with his life. He came across a skylight floating about on a piece of the stern-post of the ship—a striking bit of evidence of the utter break-up of the hull—and upon this, with nine others, he floated away from the wreck, the sea constantly breaking over them, until at length they found themselves in smoother water, inside the reef, and one of their number joyfully exclaimed that he could touch bottom with his feet, and that he could see some of the people standing about in the shallow water and on pieces of wreck which had grounded inside the surf.

When daylight came, they found, indeed, but little encouragement ; only a small portion of the steamer, with the machinery, etc., remained. And as for themselves, while they

had hoped, as they groped about and waded in the darkness, that they were nearing some solid shore, the daylight showed them nothing but submerged rocks, the water eighteen inches deep at the shallowest places. This was owing to the ship having been lost on the north-east side of Alacran Reef, where a complete line of rocks, without a break, encloses a shallow lake of large extent, some eight or nine miles across. On the further side are a few islets, and even a little harbour, which has been dignified by the name of Port Alacran, though it deserves it only on the strength of the saying: "Any port in a storm." Of course, these poor people could not see this more substantial shelter, and so they had to stand about in the water, or pile up bits of wreckage to make a sort of raft above the surface—there was plenty of it about.

On the wreck there were still about forty people clinging, to whom no assistance could be rendered. The survivors on the reef huddled together, shivering; in a norther in the Gulf of Mexico the temperature drops many degrees, so it was to these soaked people bitterly cold. Most of them were suffering from severe bruises, etc., and some were seriously injured by the awful conflict with the sea amidst masses of wreck. They tried to find some more clothes among the chests, etc., which were washing about, but with very little success.

Fortunately, the captain and some of the officers were among the saved, and an effort was immediately made to patch up the lifeboat, in order that she might be sent over to Yucatan to bring help. The carpenter had been drowned, but the chief engineer and some others took the job in hand, and contrived to make her seaworthy in a certain measure. They had some provisions of odd kinds, with some wine and brandy, washed over from the wreck; and in this very doubtful boat the chief officer with six men, Mr. Davies, the Admiralty mail agent, and the American Consul for Vera Cruz, who would act as interpreter, embarked. The sad assemblage on the rude craft saw them depart, at 5 p.m. on the 12th, scarcely hoping that they would ever get safely over. Then they set to work

to improve their refuge, collecting more planks, etc., and keeping them together as best they could.

Meanwhile the wretched people on the wreck, realising that no help could come to them from their shipmates, were committing themselves to the surf, in the hope of reaching the smoother water. Few succeeded; they could be seen, sometimes half a dozen at a time, jumping off, in the hope of getting along on a piece of wreck, but they were nearly all battered and drowned by the cruel surf; and when, on the 13th, the five last attempted, on some spars they had lashed together, to join their comrades, two were drowned before their eyes.

There were now sixty-nine persons on the raft, which they enlarged still further, and lashed with odd bits of rope; and they had collected three barrels of flour, one small barrel of oatmeal, one small cask of brandy, one barrel of vinegar, one case of claret, about three cases of other wines, three hams, two small cheeses, one small basket of preserved apples, a piece of bacon, two live pigs, one live sheep, one dead sheep, one live dog, one tin of treacle, one small barrel of butter, and one box of candles—no water, it will be noticed.

On the 14th there was a great "find"—a writing-desk, in a corner of which was a little box containing about a dozen wax matches. They were too wet to light, of course, so they were stuck in the flour to dry, and a Spanish passenger pocketed the box, throwing the matches away! This very stupid and selfish person had also pocketed a jar of jam, but he was soon made to disgorge it, and they all crawled about on the raft looking for the few matches in the crannies. Luckily they found some, and were presently able to light a fire and cook some mutton, which, washed down with a little wine, they found delicious; but nothing takes the place of water, and they began to suffer from thirst. They found that a few drops of vinegar gave much relief. Some tried brandy or wine mixed with salt water.

The chief engineer set to work to construct some sort of a condenser to make fresh water, and he actually succeeded to

a certain extent ; but the great work was the construction of a strong raft which would suffice to take them to the small island which the captain assured them lay on the further side of the reef—or even to convey them to the mainland—for they did not hope for much from the lifeboat, with her poor, crazy, smashed-in bows covered with a rough bit of canvas secured by a few nails, and the inside stuffed up with old clothes and rubbish.

However, the chief officer and his men contrived to reach the coast, or, rather, they sighted a brig within ten miles of Sisal—a Spanish brig, the captain of which was left on shore at Sisal, the mate being compelled to put to sea in a hurry on account of the norther. This officer at once made sail for the coast, and the captain, Bernadino Camp, coming on board and hearing the story, at once left his cargo, his intended passengers to Havana, and everything and everybody else to shift for themselves, got some extra water on board, and sailed for Alacran Reef.

On the morning of the 15th of February, when the raft party were progressing well with their work, and the engineers had contrived to condense six bottles of water, which were carefully corked up for future emergency, some one suddenly cried out :

“A sail !”

This was our good friend Captain Camp in his brig. He sailed round the reef at a safe distance with a boat towing astern ; then hove-to, and sent his boat in, right over the reef—and they must have been clever fellows at handling her, for there is, the surveyors tell us, no break at all in the line of rock. However, here they were, with roast fowls, biscuit, and water—what a welcome relief ! And the Spanish captain came in himself, with an exceedingly humane and generous instinct, to reassure the castaways by his presence ; for as long as he was there, he said, they might be sure the brig would not desert them.

With the large canoe, which came with the brig, and her own boat, about thirty of the survivors were actually got on board, through the surf, before dark, not without great risk and

some mishaps, though happily no lives were lost; but the following day the brig appeared in the distance on the south side—the other was too dangerous. So Captain Parsons and the remaining survivors had to get across the lagoon in the large canoe, which came once more through the surf. Forty-two of them started across in her—a difficult journey, on account of the many “heads” of coral rock cropping up, and the shoal places upon which the surf broke afresh. They spent a night in the canoe, but eventually reached Percy Island, upon which there were a couple of huts, used by fishermen when they came from the mainland for turtle.*

Well, their troubles were practically over; embarkation was easy enough from the island, and on the 3rd of March they arrived at Havana on board the Spanish brig, Captain Camp and his chief officer treating them with great kindness; nor would they at first accept any sort of remuneration or compensation for the time lost in the regular business of the brig. However, the British Consul and a number of others at Havana collected the sum of four thousand dollars (about £800), which the gallant Spaniards were compelled to accept, as a mark of appreciation of their excellent services.

And thus ended the wreck of the *Tweed*, with the loss of over seventy lives—a remarkable story in more ways than one. It certainly should never have happened; this was the opinion of nautical men of repute at the time, though I have not found a report of any official inquiry about it. Nowadays the captain who lost his ship in such a manner would have to answer for it to the Board of Trade, and would certainly be deprived of his certificate. The *Tweed* ran on shore on the the north-east part of Alacran Reef, when she should, with proper care, have passed about thirty miles *south* of it; and the way is marked, and was then marked on the chart by the depth of water. Had the lead been frequently used, the disaster could never have happened.

* For many years past there has been a lighthouse on the Alacran Reef. It was not there at this time, of course, but the little “port” had even then been thoroughly surveyed by an English naval officer.

Another point is the awfully short space of time in which the ship was broken up; about half an hour sufficed, after she struck, to leave practically nothing in the shape of a ship—only engines and boilers on the rocks, and a battered piece of the bow. This gives you some idea of the tremendous power of a great breaking sea, such as was beating on the north side of the Alacran Reef. No structure will stand it for long, and a wooden vessel, such as the *Tweed*, is like matchwood under its terrific force.

Another point in which this shipwreck is unlike many others which we read of—there were four women on board, two ladies with their maid, and the stewardess; but there is no mention of any effort to save them. We are not told whether they were saved or not; but it would have been better to hear of some men at least attempting it, if they lost their own lives in doing so.

A VOYAGE TO CHINA

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

THERE is, and has been for many years, more than one way of going to China ; you can go by the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, which is the short cut, or you can go round the Cape of Good Hope—which is a very long way round. The Suez Canal was opened for traffic about thirty-eight years ago, and at that time it had been the practice, for nearly twenty years, to go as far as Alexandria in one steamer, across the Isthmus of Suez by rail, and do the remainder of the voyage in another steamer, the only way of getting there without changing ships being round the Cape.

It was during this period, a few years before the Suez Canal was opened, that this voyage was made about which we are going to talk now. Had the canal been opened, I think our ship drew too much water to go through it, so she would have been obliged to go round the Cape in any case.

The *Limerick* was a fine "two-decker" of the old school, with powerful engines and a vast spread of canvas, designed to carry ninety-one guns in all ; but a good many of these were left behind on this occasion, as the vessel was being used for a special purpose ; that is, to convey to China a complete crew for the flagship and several small vessels on that station, and bring home the crews from these same ships ; and so, as you will guess, she had a pretty large ship's company for the voyage. In fact, about eleven hundred men and over one hundred officers of various ranks assembled on board when she was commissioned at Portsmouth—twelve hundred people collected within the comparatively small compass of a ship's

hull—quite a little town, and all under the control of one man, who, once the vessel put to sea, was king and parliament, and judge and jury, and every kind of authority you can imagine, rolled into one. The captain's sway at sea is absolute, and every soul, from highest to lowest, owes him perfect and instant obedience. In the navy, where almost every officer and man has been accustomed from boyhood to strict discipline, this is very well understood, and taken as a matter of course, and as a rule everything works very smoothly.

Here, then, are these hundreds of men pitchforked on board the big ship, alongside the dockyard, on a November morning, and every one of them has to be appointed to his duties aloft, his gun, his station in the event of fire, his mess, his number on the ship's books, and so on. They come on board like a flock of sheep; orderly enough, but merely a crowd of men, waiting to be told where to go and what to do.

The commander, however, is ready for them. He has been supplied beforehand with a complete list of the ship's company, and with the assistance of the master-at-arms, a clerk or two, and the first and gunnery lieutenants, every man's station and duty has been determined; they are mustered by the officers and ship's police, and each one, as he passes round in front of the table, saluting the commander, is handed a card, with all information upon it, something in this style.

HENRY JONES, Able Seaman

Number on ship's books . . . 531

Number on Watchbill (maintop) 342

Gun, No. 4 at No. XII., maindeck

Mess, No. VII.

His number on the watchbill tells him that he is in the port watch, which is composed of all the even numbers; all the odd-number men are starboard watch, and so on.

In a marvellously short space of time the big ship's company is organised, and the business of preparing for

sea goes on—plenty to do, in getting stores on board, “bending” sails, that is, securing each sail to its proper yard, etc., and a hundred and one odds and ends.

Ten days later the port admiral—a very autocratic person—comes on board to inspect the ship; every officer and man is mustered, and salutes the admiral as he answers his name; and in the afternoon the ship is released from her hold on the dockyard jetty, and steams out to Spithead, the band on board an ironclad close by playing “The Girl I left Behind Me,” as the *Limerick* slowly moves off. This is an old custom, a sort of expression of sympathy, I suppose, with those who are leaving wives and sweethearts behind for three or four years, as is so frequently the lot of sailors.

A week later the cry is “Hands, up anchor,” the great “mudhook” is dragged out of English ground, and the *Limerick* commences her long voyage to China.

Not so fast. She is not fairly off yet, for a very curious and somewhat comical incident causes her to put back.

Every night at sea the watch coming on deck for duty is mustered by the midshipman or sub-lieutenant of the watch; and at eight o'clock upon this first night at sea, when the *Limerick* was steaming quietly down Channel, the sub-lieutenant was thus engaged. He had a sharp, commanding voice, and he presently came to a man on his list who rejoiced in the name of Arthur Port. The muster took place close by the steering wheel, where two men, under the supervision of a quartermaster, were keeping the ship on her course by the compass.

“Arthur Port!” rang out the officer’s voice sharply. The man did not instantly answer.

“Arthur Port!” more loudly.

“Hard-a-port it is, sir!” replied the quartermaster; and in a moment over went the helm, and the big ship’s head began to swing rapidly round.

Now it happened, at this moment, that the *Limerick* was passing close to a lumbering collier brig, crawling along in the light breeze; and before the order could be contradicted,

before the officer of the watch or any one else quite realised what was going on, the huge line-of-battle ship swung round to starboard,* and narrowly missed running right over the collier, the skipper of which expressed his opinion of the naval officers in terms more forcible than elegant. As it was, the huge bowsprit of the man-of-war did some damage to the brig aloft, and after a great deal of fuss the *Limerick* took her in tow, and steamed back to Spithead, where the port admiral ordered an inquiry; and eventually the Admiralty paid for the repairs to the collier.

"What's in a name?" asks Shakespeare. Well, a seaman's name very nearly caused the sinking of a brig in the Channel, with probable loss of life!

Now, at length, we are fairly started, and this time under sail, for there is a strong, keen wind from the north, which holds out well, and the ship goes down Channel at eight or nine knots. The shores of England fade into distance, and the great double lights on the *Lizard* blink a kindly farewell; our voyage of seventeen thousand miles or so has commenced.

There is naturally a good deal of monotony about a long voyage, though in a sailing ship making this passage round the Cape there are many varieties of weather to amuse you. The *Limerick*, of course, only steamed when it was absolutely necessary, and weather, when under sail, is weather; it's not the same as in a mail steamer, when you go slick through everything, good or bad. You have to consider your course, in order to get the most advantageous winds; if you tried to make the steamer's passage to the Cape, for instance, it would take you a "month of Sundays." You have to keep well over towards South America, and then slant across to the Cape. If you are not going to call there you keep a good distance

* This may strike you as strange, when the helm was put *hard to port*; but the term really means that the *tiller* is put over to port, which brings the *rudder*, and consequently the ship's head, round to *starboard*; similarly, when the helm is put a-starboard, the ship swings round to port.—ED.

south of it to get the benefit of the west winds; the *Limerick*, however, was under orders to put in there.

The first place of call was Madeira, that beautiful island—beautiful, whether seen from a distance, rising purple from the horizon, or closer, when the lights and shadows of the forest-clad spurs and ravines can be distinguished, the white houses picturesquely contrasting with the various shades of green.

The anchorage at Funchal is not a very good one, the water being deep, the bottom rocky and the bay exposed to south-west winds, which, however, are not very common.

The *Limerick*, nevertheless, had to clear out in a hurry from this very cause. A swell set in from south-west, and when we tried to weigh the anchor, the ship pitching considerably, it would not start—evidently it had hooked a rock, and when a crowd of men on the capstan had hove the cable “short,” they could get no further with it. “Heave, men!” cried the officers: “heave and break her out!” They hove, and the ship helped as she rose on the swell—but to no purpose; and then the “messenger” parted.* When this was repaired, a strong “heave” was at length successful—not in weighing the anchor, but in breaking it off short, so that only the upper part came up—the hook remaining at the bottom, and there, I suppose, it remains to this day.

At St. Vincent, in the Cape Verde Islands, we took in some coal. This island is a great volcanic cinder, not at all attractive or beautiful. Here a funny thing happened. In these old ships it was customary to hang from the bows a great canvas funnel, reaching to the water, down which slops and scraps, remains of pea soup, etc., were flung; this was known as the “head-shoot.” One night the man in charge of it came and reported that, when he was just preparing to get it in, it had suddenly been torn away with great violence, and disappeared!

* The old-fashioned method of getting in the cable was by means of a smaller chain termed the “messenger,” which passed round the capstan and two rollers in the bow, and the cable was brought to it by a number of ropes, “nippers” attended by men who kept putting them on forward and taking them off as they neared the capstan.—ED.

We could only conclude that a big shark, attracted by the more or less savoury morsels adhering to it, had appropriated the whole thing; but he must have been sadly disappointed by the heavy percentage of tough canvas!

And now for the longest stretch, to the Cape of Good Hope. The north-east trade wind blows, at this season (January), as far south as the equator, or nearly so; here there is a belt of calms, and generally much rain; then the south-east trade wind holds, very frequently, as far as thirty degrees of south latitude: so the plan is to sail across with the one, well over towards South America, then pick up the other to take you over to the Cape. There is, off the coast of South America, a very small island named Trinidad—a little way north of Rio Janeiro—and it will give you some idea of our route when I tell you that we got within 200 miles of this island before we turned eastward—it looks very close on a map.

During this part of our voyage, with fine warm weather of the trade wind, we did a lot of exercise with the sails. The commander, an energetic person, with a very sharp, clear voice, and a general capacity for making the men jump about, took a great delight in making and shortening sail against time: and with the crowd of men we had on board, every rope could be manned at once.

"That's very fair," the commander would say, "making plain sail in three minutes—but you ought to do it in *two* minutes. Boatswain's mate, pipe: 'Make plain sail in two minutes!'"

And then you just had to get out of the way. The men all knew their stations, and they raced with the ropes—topsail sheets and halyards, then the upper sails, all at once, it seemed—if you got in the way, you were simply bowled over—and within two minutes, from bare spars, the ship was a cloud of canvas; I think the men rather enjoyed it; and I am sure the commander did.

There were about sixty of us in the gunroom—sub-lieutenants, assistant paymasters, clerks, and a lot of midshipmen. Our sea-chests were all crowded together in the cockpit below, where also we slept in hammocks. There used to be

no provision whatever made in those days for a gunroom officer to have a bath—a small pewter basin in your chest was the only means of washing, unless you got your marine servant, now and then, to get you a tub of water. There was no lack of water on board the *Limerick*, as, being a steamer, we could of course condense as much as we liked*; and the commander, out of consideration for our numbers, caused a screen to be rigged up on deck while the ship's company were at breakfast, inside of which our servants placed our tubs and baths; and there we splashed, with great delight, every morning. No one could wish for a better bathroom, in the tropics, and when you had finished, you tipped up your tub into the scuppers, and the topmen dried the deck afterwards.

Sometimes the captain would order the lifebuoy to be let go, so as to give the men some practice in picking up any one who fell overboard. The watch on deck was quite strong enough to take in the sails and so on, and the boat's crew, always detailed to be ready for such work, got away very quickly as a rule. One day it was a real cry of "wolf!" A marine, going up to hang some clothes in the rigging, missed his footing, and went overboard. The cry was raised instantly, "Man overboard!" and the captain, as the man floated by, shouted to him: "Can you swim?" The marine was not in the least degree flurried by seeing the ship sail past him—he waved his hand—"I'm all right, sir!" and in about ten minutes he was on board again. This was a very simple business, but sometimes it is far otherwise; a heavy sea, or a dark night, and in spite of every effort, and some risk of life, you are compelled at length to give up hope, hoist the boat, and make sail again, while the clerk marks the man's name on the books, "D.D.": *discharged, dead*.

One morning, before the men's breakfast, while the watch on

* That is, by getting up steam in one of the boilers, and letting it into a regular condenser, where it encountered a chill from a jet of sea water, and so was converted once more into water—the steam from salt water, when condensed, makes fresh water of the purest description, and a great quantity can be obtained in a day or two in this manner.—Ed.

deck was scrubbing and cleaning things, and a few men were aloft about odd jobs, there was a sudden shout from the fore-top: "There's a man down from aloft, sir! The man is killed, sir!" I saw him come down. There seemed no reason in the world why he should; he was a smart, active able seaman, and was coming quite leisurely down the foretopmast rigging, when somehow he lost his hold. Unfortunately, he was at the after edge of the rigging; had he been in the centre, he might have fallen on the broad, elastic spread of the fore-rigging below, bounced off overboard, and been none the worse; but being by the after shroud of the topmast rigging, he swung round in trying to get hold again, and came down on deck. He was instantly killed, and in the afternoon we buried him, sewn up in his hammock with three shot at the foot to sink the body. It is a terrible thing to see and hear a man come down from aloft. I have seen too many in my time!

Well, here is the Cape of Good Hope in sight at last—eight hundred feet high, with a lighthouse on top, supposed to be visible thirty-six miles; but it isn't, or was not in those days. This is a very treacherous coast, with the varying currents, fogs, and boisterous winds—many are the wrecks which have happened round this part of Africa, and many hundreds the lives lost.

And how long has it taken us to get here? Seventy days from Spithead, of which seven have been spent at anchor—a poor passage, I must admit. We have traversed 8,983 miles over the ground, and 9,445 through the water—that is to say, we have sometimes been off our course under sail, and have occasionally had a current against us—and we have averaged a trifle over six knots through the water. This is not clipper sailing!

We do not anchor off Cape Town, but round the other side of the Cape, in Simon's Bay, where there is a small dockyard, the Commodore's house, and a very indifferent club—and nothing else. A very uninteresting place, Simon's Town; let us get out of it as soon as we can, and get on our way to Singapore.

On this part of our voyage, also, we must scheme a little to make the best use of the wind. On the Indian Ocean the south-east trade blows; but before we can safely avail ourselves of it, we must get far enough to the eastward to make sure that it will not land us to leeward of our goal, which is the strait between Sumatra and Java, the gateway to China, for sailing ships. Accordingly, upon quitting Simon's Bay—which is in about 36 degrees south latitude—we steer eastward and southward, to catch the west wind, which blows, for the greater part of the year, all round the earth down there, rolling along great seas, a mile from crest to crest, and deep enough in the hollow to partially becalm the sails of a small vessel.

We are not, however, going far enough south to get in the thick of all this. If we were bound for Australia, we should: but all we want now is to get a lift along to the eastward, and about 45 degrees south will do for that.

And now we come into another world. The Southern Ocean seems different, somehow, from any other part of the globe. The sky is usually cloudy, the seas run in mighty furrows, the colouring is altogether strange to us. Our big ship bows along easily before the west and south-west winds, rolling jovially, and lifting her stern handsomely to the following seas. We have no excessive amount of wind, and so the seas do not worry us by constantly trying to get on board over the quarter—farther south, you frequently have to choose between the danger of "broaching to,"* and the unpleasant process of bringing your ship round, at the risk of getting the decks swept by a mountainous sea, and laying her to.

The wind struck cold, and we found our upper deck bath

* When running before a gale, with a very heavy sea, there is great difficulty in steering the ship, and there is danger, if she gets round with the wind broad on the quarter, of a big sea catching her stern and whirling her right round broadside to the wind, when she may lose her masts, or get a lot of men washed overboard, in a few minutes: this is termed "broaching to." If you can bring her up to the wind, and lie to under stormsails, you will be safe enough; but the process is very dangerous, and you have to try to seize a favourable moment, or you may fare worse when the wind comes on the broadside, than if she broached to.—ED.

room decidedly airy, but we enjoyed this run in the Southern Ocean. Constantly we were attended by a number of albatross, sailing over and round us, and never appearing to flap their wings, or exert themselves in the least. Hundreds of miles from any land, they maintain their tireless flight, and if they ever sleep at all, it must be on the wing. One day, soon after we left the Cape, being calm, we lowered a boat, and several officers took their guns. The big birds came round to inspect this curiosity, and several were shot. When you get them close to, you realise how big they are; one of these measured over twelve feet across its outstretched wings, and their bodies are very bulky and solid. If a man falls overboard, albatross will sometimes hover over and threaten to attack him: but they are rather easily scared by shouts or gestures, and I never heard of a man being really injured by them—though it must make him exceedingly unhappy to have the huge bird hanging over him with its formidable beak!

We ran to the eastward until we sighted the barren, rocky little island of St. Paul's—you will find it, a mere speck on the map, between the Cape and Australia—and then gradually hauled up for Sunda Strait. We had a generous south-east trade wind across the Indian Ocean, sometimes making ten or eleven knots; it was fine sailing, the wind on the beam, with a good lump of a sea. One morning, when we rather "fancied" ourselves as going along bravely, a sail was sighted on the lee quarter—the port quarter that is. By-and-by we made her out to be a large merchant vessel, bound the same way as we were, but converging slightly on our course. Well, we didn't fancy ourselves very much as the day went on, for that ship must have been travelling at least three knots faster than we were! She hoisted her colours and reported herself—the *Wild Deer*, from London for Shanghai, seventy-six days out. We displayed our white ensign, and our friend politely dipped his colours in salute as he passed ahead; we felt rather "tame" deer! Of course, she was a clipper, built specially for speed under sail; and vessels such as the *Limerick*, though their masts seemed enormous, had neither the build nor the

proportionate amount of canvas to compete with ships of this class—still, we were enjoying ourselves.

And then Sumatra and Java came in sight, with that gateway between them, through which so many thousand ships have carried the British flag to and fro in the China trade.

And here we seemed to come again upon a new world. This is the gateway to the East—the extreme East, or “Far East” as newspapers term it nowadays. Steaming up to the narrow strait, we stopped the engines, and fired a gun. Immediately a host of natives came alongside in small boats, laden with fruits of various kinds; they were all chattering together; many of them having a sort of knowledge of English, or some kind of lingo which they imagined was English, while old hands, who had been out here before, jawed back at them in a language quite as barbarous; but they got on all right, and much bargaining and buying was accomplished, though it poured with rain most of the time, coming straight down in big drops—or streams—amidst a glassy, steamy calm. We were very damp before we had done our bargaining!

Then we steamed on, for the strait of Banca, between Sumatra and the island of Banca; and we passed not far from that small island of Krakatoa, which, some twelve or thirteen years later, was practically demolished by that terrific eruption and earthquake, which altered the soundings all about that sea, and sent a ring of waves careering all over the world; and also, by the way, caused a most extraordinary glare in the sky, after sunset, for months afterwards, said to be occasioned by millions of minute particles of bituminous volcanic substance, floating high in air; I well remember seeing it at Portsmouth.

The islands of Java and Sumatra have an appearance of the most luxuriant vegetation; there is something about them, too, which strikes one as very uncommon—and indeed, there are beasts and birds and insects there, which are found nowhere else in the world. One has an impression, too, that “uncanny” and tremendous forces are present—volcanic, electric. I have seen, subsequently, the most extraordinary

electrical phenomena there, and one felt as if there might be an earthquake or something any moment.

Well, on through Banca Strait, where we anchored for the night—and a precious hot strait it is!—and anchoring once more in the passage of the Rhio Strait, among numerous islands, we arrive at Singapore, having travelled 6,444 miles over the ground, 6,502 through the water, from Simon's Bay. We have come a little faster, making an average of over seven and a half knots under sail, and six knots when under steam.

We must not stay long here, for they are anxiously expecting us at Hong Kong—all those people who want to be homeward bound. Singapore is very nearly on the equator; but it is not nearly as hot as many other places which can boast of considerably more latitude—Aden, for instance, and Cartagena, on the north coast of South America.

Our voyage is nearly over; we steam all the way to Hong Kong, some 1,600 miles, and arrive there on the afternoon of the 2nd of May, having accomplished in all, 17,000 miles over the ground, and 17,500 through the water, from Spithead, at an average speed of six knots—a long journey!

We all feel very fit after it; but the climate of Hong Kong in May and June is well calculated to take all the fitness out of one—hot and moist, the anchorage and town sheltered from the prevailing south-west monsoon by the high peak, it is a place to be avoided if possible at this season. As we cannot avoid it, we stay there and lose flesh, and get little feverish attacks, while we are busy discharging our crews to their various ships, and living on board a hulk meanwhile; and finally we take over charge of the flagship, an ungainly and very useless ironclad, and watch the *Limerick* steam out with all the "homeward bounders." We play "Homeward Bound," and they play "Auld lang Syne," until her tall spars disappear round the point; and here we are, established for three years on the China station.

THE "HERMIONE"

THE year 1797 was a very unhappy one in the annals of the British Navy, on account of the many mutinies on board our ships, some of them accompanied by cold-blooded murder of the officers, and of the members of the crew who remained staunch to their duty.

The great mutiny at the Nore was, of course, the most important : but the evil spirit spread among the fleet, and ships on foreign stations followed suit.

The men had previously set forth a number of grievances and hardships which they said existed ; there is little doubt that they had a good deal to complain of, and the authorities found themselves compelled to make some concessions, which however, did not, as we know, end the matter ; and many were the scenes of violence, followed frequently by courts martial and death sentences, which disgraced the Navy during a year or two.

Of these there was no more terrible example than the mutiny on board the *Hermione*, a 32-gun frigate, commanded by Captain Hugh Pigot, a courageous and capable officer, but a tyrant of cruel disposition, who habitually abused his high position as captain of a man-of-war, by acts of contemptuous brutality towards his crew ; he was, in fact, a living example of the absurdity of the popular saying, that a bully is always a coward.

The instinct of discipline, which is so strongly developed on board a naval ship, probably alone prevented an outbreak a good deal earlier. The shocking example set by the mutineers at the Nore, and others on board detached vessels, acted as fuel to the smouldering fire of discontent and hatred with

which Captain Pigot and his methods were regarded by his ship's company; and it is said that the final outburst was the result of a piece of almost incredible callousness and brutality. Like other tyrannical commanders of that period, Pigot was in the habit of punishing his men with the utmost severity for any slackness in performing their duties aloft—duties, it must be remembered, of imperative importance in those sailing days, when a piece of smart seamanship during an action might, and frequently did, decide the outcome of the fight, or might save a vessel from destruction on a lee shore. Still, important as such smartness was, the measures adopted by Pigot and men of his stamp to promote it cannot be defended; and upon this occasion, the men on the mizentopsail-yard not reefing the sail with sufficient alacrity to please him, Pigot swore he would flog the last man in off the topsail-yard—a thing which, unhappily, was sometimes done. The men knowing that the captain would be as good—or as bad—as his word, scurried off the yard in the rivalry of leaving some one else behind, and two of them, missing their hold while springing into the topmast rigging, fell to the deck and were killed. "Throw the lubbers overboard!" said Pigot.

Whether this was too much for the crew, or whether the outbreak had been already planned, I do not know; but that night, the ship at the time being off the Island of Porto Rico, in the West Indies, the mutineers, having secured the minority who were faithful to their duty, proceeded to attack their captain and officers. The first victim was Mr. Read, the first lieutenant, who encountered them on their way aft, and endeavoured to remonstrate with them. Him they instantly killed, being all armed with pikes and boarding axes; and then they went to the captain's quarters. Captain Pigot, aroused by the commotion, ran out of his cabin, and was attacked and seriously wounded; he then retreated to his cabin, and was seated on a couch, faint from loss of blood, when four of the desperadoes entered. The captain had meanwhile armed himself with his sword, with which he endeavoured to keep them off, weak as he was; and for a moment some of the ruffians, seeing their

captain bleeding, were appalled by the hideousness of their deed, and hung back ; but a man named Crawley, who was a ringleader, exclaimed : " What, four against one, and yet afraid ? Here goes then ! " and instantly plunged a pike into the captain's body. This was enough ; the others advanced, and thrust him, pierced with many wounds, through a port into the sea, and shocking to relate, he was not even dead, but was heard to speak as he floated astern.

The murderers subsequently killed two lieutenants, the purser, the surgeon, the captain's clerk, a midshipman, the boatswain, and the officer of marines.

Crawley, the man who took the lead in the captain's cabin, was his coxswain, and the one man, perhaps, in the ship, to whom he had shown uniform kindness, and one account says that the captain appealed to him for assistance, upon which he replied, " Here I am to dispatch you ! " and afterwards uncorked the best wines for his accomplices to regale themselves with.

The mutineers then took the ship to La Guayra, on the north coast of South America, and made a present of her to the Spaniards. I suppose they compelled the master, whom they had been careful not to kill, to navigate the ship for them—he, and the other officers who were spared, were able afterwards, when released by the Spaniards, to give evidence against the mutineers, a good many of whom were subsequently brought to justice.

At the trial of Crawley, when the Court was cleared, the charge being fully proved, to consider the sentence, Sir Edward Pellew, a member of the Court, insisted that the man should be hanged immediately ; pointing out that, if he were permitted the usual respite, he might pull himself together, and pose as a sort of martyr, thus depriving the terrible lesson of a good deal of its value. The President at first declared himself unable to perform such a terrible act, but the others being unanimous, he yielded ; and when Crawley, being called in to hear his sentence, appeared with a somewhat swaggering air, he was informed that he was to be hanged in *one hour*. This changed

his tune, and he fell on the deck, imploring the Court to give him more time: but the signal was immediately made to the ships present that the execution would take place in one hour, and the sentence was inexorably carried out.

Well, this man and others were hanged, as they richly deserved to be, but that did not annul the disgrace of our ship being in the hands of the enemy. The Admiral on the station remonstrated with the Governor of La Guayra, pointing out the terrible evils which might ensue from his recognition of such an action—but in vain; the *Hermione* was retained by the Spaniards, and fitted out to fight against us; and she remained in their hands for two years—though I imagine they kept her pretty closely in harbour, well knowing that she would be the object of desperate and determined attack, were she to encounter one of our ships.

The desire to win back our frigate was, indeed, constantly in the minds of the captains on the station, and Captain Otway of the *Trent*, hearing a report in July 1799 that the *Hermione* was then at La Guayra, went in at midnight on the 7th July to try and cut her out. There were only two boats, manned by volunteers, and Captain Otway commanded in person. However, after a very long pull, they were disappointed, for the *Hermione* was not there, having sailed a few days previously for Puerto Cabello, not far distant. Otway and his men, determined not to return empty-handed, proceeded to attack a corvette in the inner harbour, and carried her, after a desperate fight. The forts, however, were alarmed by the firing; a heavy cannonade was opened upon the vessel as she was towed out by our boats, and at daylight a strong flotilla of gunboats was discovered in chase. The *Trent* was not in sight, and so Lieutenant Thomas Ussher, in charge of the corvette, sent his men into the boats alongside, having previously pointed a couple of double-shotted guns down the hatchway; when the gunboats were getting close, he fired the guns, knocking out the vessel's bottom, and liberated the Spanish prisoners below; their friends in the gunboats stopped to rescue the men from the sinking ship, while the *Trent's*

boats made their escape—a cleverly managed affair—but the *Hermione* was still in the enemy's hands.

In October 1799 the *Surprise* frigate, commanded by Captain Edward Hamilton, was ordered by Admiral Sir Hyde Parker to go in quest of the *Hermione*, which, he had information, was likely to sail shortly for Havana, passing between the island of Amba and Cape Romani, near the entrance of the Gulf of Maracaybo. Cruising towards Puerto Cabello, he found the ship lying there, in the entrance of the harbour, moored between two very formidable batteries.

Puerto Cabello lies between the Gulf of Maracaybo and Caraccas. It is a snug harbour, but very small, the entrance, a sort of bottle-neck, being only about 180 yards across; it widens inside and there is water enough for a large vessel, but very little room to swing round.

On either side of this entrance, as the accounts say, and immediately commanding the *Hermione*, was a powerful fort,* so that any one who wanted the frigate would have to take her away from under the guns, at a distance, practically, of only one hundred yards.

Captain Hamilton and his men wanted her badly; he called all hands on deck, and pointed out to them that the honour of their country and of the British navy was involved; that it was intolerable that this frigate of ours should be there in the enemy's hands, through such a disgraceful affair as the mutiny; and he called for one hundred volunteers to go with him in the boats and cut her out.

Of course, there could be only one reply to such a speech—the men cheered vigorously, and every one of them volunteered for the service. When the number had been selected by the captain and officers, some of the others offered money bribes to be allowed to take a "lucky" fellow's place.

It was, of course, a very desperate undertaking: it would have been far better if the *Hermione* had come out and been

* The Spanish chart, from a survey made five years previously, only shows a fort on *one* side of the entrance; possibly another may have been constructed meanwhile.—ED.

engaged by the *Surprise*: but this there was no sign of her doing: the fact of the British frigate being about was quite sufficient to keep her "indoors."

The attack was planned for the 24th October: fifty men were to board the ship, and the remainder were to cut the cables, and tow her out with the boats. Of course, Hamilton hoped to take the enemy by surprise; all these boat attacks were planned with that view, but the surprise, it must be admitted, very seldom came off.

Our boats were discovered by the guard-boats at a distance of three-quarters of a mile; these boats, armed with a gun and small arms, immediately opened fire, thus raising the alarm, both in the ship and the forts. Two of our boats stopped to engage them, instead of following hard after the captain.

The Spaniards, as was afterwards discovered, hearing firing in two directions, thought that they were being attacked by two frigates, and banged away with their guns in the supposed direction of these imaginary vessels! Captain Hamilton's boat rowed alone under the bows, and was brought up by a rope from the buoy to the frigate getting foul of her rudder.

"The boat's aground, sir!" exclaimed the coxswain.

"Why, you d—d fool," said Hamilton, "how can the boat be aground and the frigate afloat?"

The rudder was unshipped, the boat swung round under the starboard bow, the guns blazing away harmlessly overhead.

Captain Hamilton led the way, but getting upon the anchor, which was slimy with mud, his feet slipped off, and his pistol exploded in his hand; but he had hold of the forerigging, and recovered himself, though he "barked" his shins. A couple of men got on the forecastle before him, and a sail which was stretched across afforded for a few moments an excellent screen to their movements; one man, however, was immediately wounded beside him.

The order was for all the boarders to assemble on the quarter-deck; so the captain and his small gang of men passed aft by the starboard gangway, and came upon the ship's com-

pany at quarters, the fighting lanterns alight, still blazing away at the two imaginary frigates.

However, a gang of Englishmen coming along the deck was another matter, and there was a very hot fight ; but Hamilton and his men pressed home the attack with their pikes so fiercely, that the Spaniards had no time to reload their muskets, and many of them had soon had enough, jumping overboard or running below.

Meanwhile, Captain Hamilton could not imagine why more of his men had not boarded, and, leaving the gunner to hold the ground they had gained, he went to find out about it. Finding some one leaning over the port bow, he went up to him, and discovered it to be Mr. M'Mullen, the surgeon, who had insisted upon joining the expedition, declaring that he would otherwise blow his brains out, and that he had his pistols ready for that purpose ! Captain Hamilton had told him that he wished him to remain on board, as he anticipated that his services would be sorely needed afterwards ; but he gave in to this piece of genuine Irish "bounce"—probably not sorry to have a regular "fire-eater" like M'Mullen to lend a hand on such an enterprise—on condition that the doctor should let the other people all get out of the boat before him. He promised ; but here he was, the first out of the boat, encouraging the men to follow him !

However, this was no time for discussing such details ; the whole party went aft by the port gangway, and obtained possession of the quarter-deck, after a hard tussle ; but, through some misunderstanding, the men pushed forward again into the starboard gangway, leaving Hamilton, with one wounded seaman, on the quarter-deck, where he was immediately attacked by four Spaniards, whom he kept at bay for a time, until he received a fearful blow from the butt end of a musket, which broke over his head and knocked him half across the deck. However, his men soon turned the tables, and the marine officer at that moment arriving in another boat, with more men, the Spaniards were hemmed in and hammered so severely that they retreated below, and made a stand on the

main-deck. The marines were down the ladder after them in no time, and drove about fifty of them into the captain's cabin, where they kept them prisoners. Another lot congregated under the forecabin; and from there they could not be dislodged except by firing on them until they surrendered—which they presently did.

Then some man who spoke Spanish came to the captain, now so severely wounded that he could not leave the quarter-deck, and told him that he had overheard the Spanish officers say they would blow up the ship, and so begged him to give no quarter. But Captain Hamilton would not hear of this; he ordered all who had surrendered to be kept under guard on either side of the deck.

Meanwhile, the cables had been cut, the men appointed had loosed the fore and maintopsails, and the boats were towing ahead. Seeing the ship moving out, the forts opened a tremendous fire, and had it not been that, in the light breeze, the smoke hung about, they might perhaps have sunk the ship. As it was, a shot got her under water, and they had to get the pumps going at once, and a grape-shot, nearly spent, hit Captain Hamilton on the leg. "Be Jove, captain," said the genial M'Mullen, "if that gun had had a few more grains of powder in it, I should just have had to cut your leg off!"

The fight for the ship was still going on as she slowly moved out, and it was not until all their ammunition was spent that the Spaniards below called for quarter.

Then the English had to secure the mainmast and pump out the ship: the fifty men imprisoned in the cabin were made to go into one of the English boats, and were veered astern in tow, to keep them out of mischief. Afterwards, all the prisoners were placed in an American schooner, to be landed at Puerto Cabello.

The Spaniards had one hundred and nineteen men killed, and ninety-seven wounded; while our casualties, most marvellously, only amounted to one killed and twelve wounded—Captain Hamilton in six places.

The fighting doctor was enthusiastically praised by every one for his gallant conduct. He wanted to stop doctoring, and be rated lieutenant, but the admiral would not permit it.

Mr. Maxwell, the gunner, greatly distinguished himself; and the ward-room officers presented him with a sword as a mark of their appreciation of his conduct.

Captain Hamilton was knighted, and received the naval gold medal of merit.

And thus the reproach was removed, and the *Hermione* restored to the British flag. The name was, however, associated with such a disgraceful episode, that Sir Hyde Parker, in his despatch to the Admiralty, stated that he had taken upon himself to rename her the *Retaliation*. Their lordships, however, improved upon this, by bestowing upon the recovered vessel the equally significant, but more dignified name, *Retribution*.

THE BURNING OF THE "AMAZON"

THE destruction of the mail steamship *Amazon* in the Bay of Biscay was a catastrophe in no degree behind the most terrible on record in fearful interest. The *Amazon* was the last built of the magnificent vessels constructed for rapid communication with the West Indies.

She was of 2,250 tons burden, 310 feet in length, and fitted with engines of 800 horse-power. Every improvement that science could suggest had been adopted on her construction and equipment; she was fitted up with the utmost convenience and luxury for her passengers, and in this respect resembled a superb hotel afloat. This splendid vessel left Southampton on her first voyage at half-past three o'clock in the afternoon of Friday the 2nd of January, 1852, having on board the mails, a very valuable cargo, 50 passengers, and a crew of 110 officers, engineers, and men. She was commanded by Captain Symons, a careful and experienced officer. During the remainder of Friday and the whole of Saturday the ship made rapid progress; everything went satisfactorily, except that the "bearings" of the engines—as is commonly or always the case with new machinery—became heated by the friction, and the speed was occasionally relaxed, or the vessel entirely stopped, to allow them to cool. Before one o'clock on Sunday morning the splendid vessel, her passengers and crew, were involved in destruction in its most appalling forms.

The ship was about 120 miles from the Lizard Light, and just entering the Bay of Biscay, the greater part of the passengers had retired to rest, and Captain Symons, who had been watching the weather—for it blew heavily right ahead—and the working of the engines, had gone below, when Mr. Vincent, midship-

man of the watch, perceived smoke and fire coming up the fore-hatchway and past the galley. The alarm-bell was instantly rung, the captain and crew rushed upon deck and directed their energies to repressing the flames. It may be said that the fire had scarcely appeared when the destruction of the vessel was ensured. The engines were urging her through the water at the rate of twelve miles an hour, a fierce gale was sweeping her from head to stern, her timbers were new and dry and the paint fresh. The flames consequently swept from the forehatchway to the stern with magical rapidity, the glass partitions giving way with sudden crash. Time for prudence and precaution there was none. The terrified passengers rushed on deck naked and distracted. Captain Symons and his officers did all that could be done under such appalling circumstances, kept manfully to their posts, and endeavoured to get the ship's head round. This was partly effected; but the ship continued her course with unabated speed, for the fierce flames had driven the men from the engine-room before they could stop the engines; from the same cause the "donkey engine," which should have placed volumes of water at command, could not be put in motion; flames rushed over the decks and destroyed the Downton pump on the main deck before the men could take a dozen turns at the wheel; thus the means for checking conflagration were the first to be consumed.

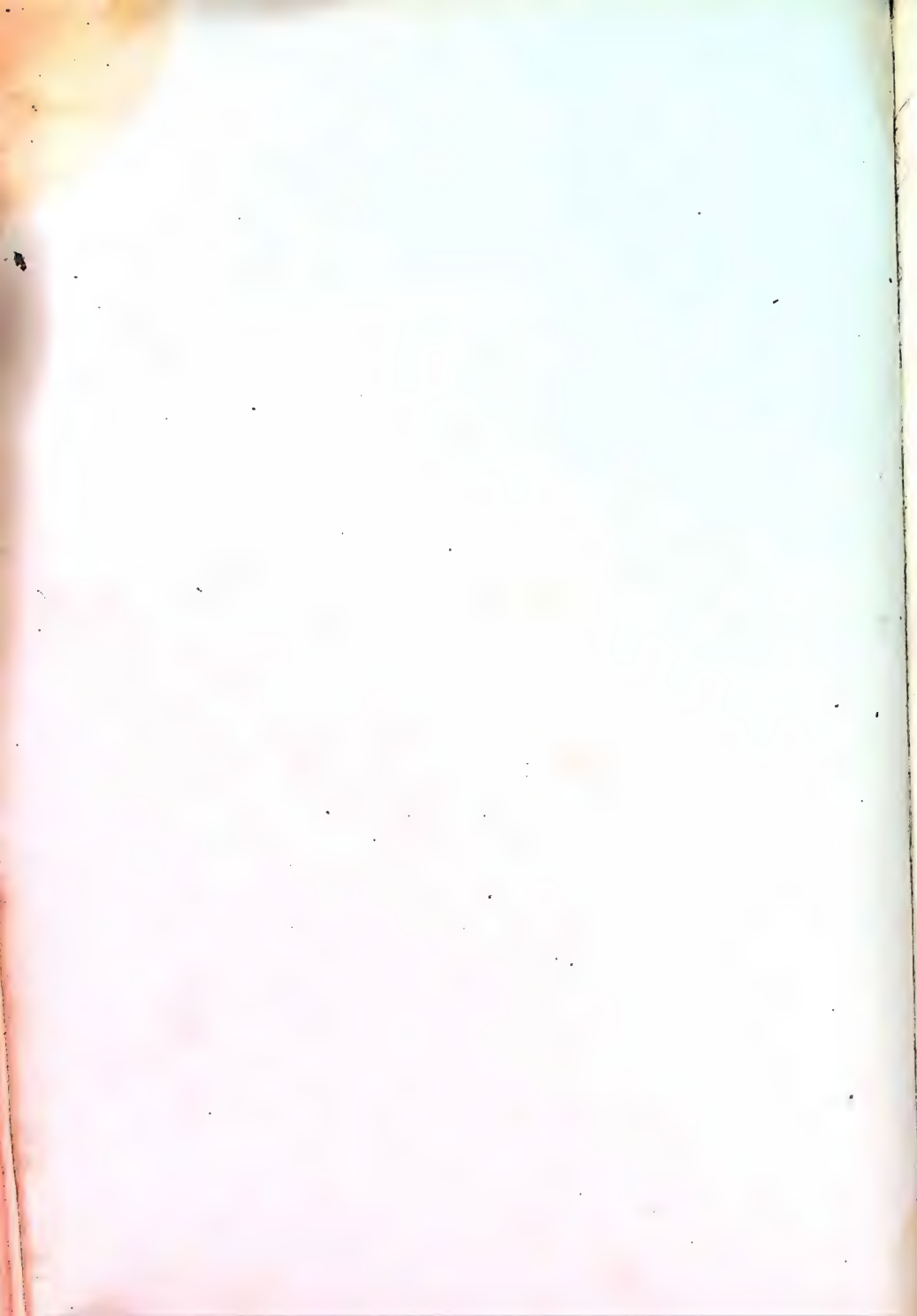
In the meanwhile some of the crew and passengers made frantic efforts to launch the boats, with a desperation which defeated their efforts. The aftermost boat was got into the water with about twenty-five persons in her; but the moment she touched the water she was swamped, and the whole perished, clinging together in a struggling mass and uttering dreadful shrieks. The pinnacle was next lowered, full of people; but by an unhappy fatality, the after-tackle alone could be unhooked, and the sea therefore swept into her and washed out all her miserable freight. The second cutter was being lowered, when by sad mismanagement the fore-tackle was let go, the boat hung perpendicularly, and



From the "Illustrated London News," January, 1852.

THE BURNING OF THE "AMAZON."

The life-boat quitting the vessel.



her living burden was tilted into the foaming waters. Others of the vessel's boats (she had nine in all) were so fitted on the decks that in the terror and emergency of the moment it proved impossible to launch them at all; two of them were enveloped in the flames while the seamen were labouring at disengaging them, and the men were consumed while yet at their work.

As the chances grew more desperate, the boats that had already been deprived of their contents; and were either half-full of water or were suspended by one end, were again resorted to by the frantic wretches; some are supposed to have made wild efforts to form a raft of the settees, two of these benches lashed together having been washed on to the shore of England.

The small boat called the dinghy and a lifeboat, containing together twenty-one persons, were all that were known to have reached the water in safety. To use the words of Mr. Neilson, a passenger, who gives the most connected account of the appalling catastrophe: "We drifted clear, the doomed ship rushing madly forward, the combined sport of the three elements; but above the roaring crash of wind and wave and fire rang the shrieks of the helpless sufferers on board the ill-fated *Amazon*." The lifeboat now hailed the dinghy, and took her crew on board, towing her astern. But they seemed to have escaped from one danger to perish by another scarcely less terrible; the oars were locked, they had no sail, no water, no provisions; the best clad were half naked, the sea raged fearfully around them, and the swelling crests as they rolled upon them were lighted to a red glow by the flames of the burning ship, which spread a lurid glare for miles around. Near them were pieces of wreck and their perishing companions. To attempt aid was madness, for the slightest deviation from a direct course would have resulted in their instant submersion. The oars were got out with difficulty, and the boat kept head to wind; a sea struck them, half filled them, and swamped the dinghy; but the boat rose buoyantly over the waves, and there seemed a possibility of escape. In

the meanwhile they observed the ship burning fiercely, broad-side to the wind ; her mainmast went first, then the foremast ; after a short interval, her mizenmast ; but by the light of this terrible scene they were enabled to perceive a ship pass between them and the burning steamer, about 300 yards distant ; they hailed her with the energy of despair ; she answered, altered her course, and bore away !

The lifeboat's crew now saw that another boat had escaped the burning ship, and they mutually shouted for that aid which neither could give. Suddenly the hailing ceased, and they saw her no more ! The chimneys of the burning ship were now red-hot, and as they crossed her stern at the distance of half a mile her magazine exploded, discharging a considerable number of rockets, and in about half an hour afterwards her funnels went over her sides, and she sank beneath the waves, and the red, lurid light, which for the last five hours had illumined the dreary expanse of ocean and formed the strong ground of hope for the attraction of succour, was succeeded by a gloomy darkness. The lifeboat's crew, sustained by the admirable conduct of young Vincent, a mere boy, who had escaped in the dinghy, and Mr. Neilson, half clothed, without food, without compass, and with an adverse wind, lost no hope, but strove manfully with their oars to reach the French coast, calculating that they must endure the sufferings of five or six days ; but their trials were providentially shortened by their coming across the brig *Marsden* bound for Carolina, commanded by Captain Evans, who took them on board and treated them with every possible kindness.

Captain Evans' first attempt was to transfer them to some homeward-bound ship ; but none being within sight, the generous commander resolved that the duties of humanity were paramount to all other obligations, put about ship and steered for England, and ran into Plymouth about mid-day of the 6th of January.

It is impossible adequately to describe the horror which the news of this appalling catastrophe spread throughout the country—through Europe, in fact. The list of those who had

embarked in the fated ship gave occasion for increased interest. Captain Symons was an officer of tried ability and experience. Lieutenant Brady, R.N., the Admiralty agent in charge of the mails, was well known and valued at Plymouth. Among the passengers were Mr. Eliot Warburton, whose literary acquirements were of a high class, and Lieutenant Grylls, R.N., on his passage to join the *Devastation*. It appeared that the persons who had embarked on the fatal voyage were thus constituted :

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|-------|-------|
| Ship's company | . | . | . | . | . | 110 |
| Admiralty agent | . | . | . | . | . | 1 |
| Passengers | . | . | . | . | . | 50 |
| | | | | | | <hr/> |
| | | | | | Total | 161 |
| | | | | | | <hr/> |

Saved in the dinghy and lifeboat, 21. Thus it seemed that no fewer than 140 persons had perished.

The first public impulse was to assist those who had escaped, and also to help the widows and orphans of those who had perished. While this work was yet beginning intelligence was received that six passengers and nineteen of the crew had been rescued by a Dutch vessel and landed at Brest on the 5th of January. The persons thus happily preserved had escaped in two boats, one of which was picked up by the Dutch galliot *Gertruida* on the evening of Sunday, and the other on the following morning. Among them were two ladies and a child.

The narrative of the rescued ladies presents remarkable instances of truest gallantry. Mrs. MacLellan had rushed from her berth when the alarm was given, with her child in her arms. Her husband (who perished) had gone to seek some clothing, when an officer took the child from her and placed both in a boat which had been lowered. Unhappily the tackles were mismanaged, the boat was swamped, and all swept out of her save the poor mother, who clung to the thwarts with her child clasped to her bosom.

Others of the ship's crew, perceiving her condition, descended to her assistance, exclaiming :

"The woman is still here, she deserves to be saved."

By their exertions the boat was got clear, and the mother and child preserved.

The other rescued lady seems to have been a stronger character. This young lady, Miss Anna Maria Smith, was going to Demerara to take the situation of governess in a family there. On hearing the alarm she rushed on deck in her nightdress, having first hastily snatched up a blanket. She succeeded in swinging herself into a boat which had been already launched. The crew of this boat exerted themselves admirably to rescue others from the waves, and stayed by the burning ship two hours at great hazard ; but though they could distinctly perceive the poor creatures huddled together aft, and many on the bows and bowsprit, none seemed to commit themselves to the sea. The young lady lay in the bottom of the boat in her nightdress and covered with the blanket ; but hearing the men say that a sail would be serviceable, she immediately offered it, and it served to keep the boat before the wind. A foreigner took the helm while the men rowed, and Miss Smith translated the men's directions to him. At 9 a.m. they discovered a sail, and pulled eagerly towards it : but she did not see them, and kept her course. The following day was calm, and the men pulled steadily for the French coast. At midnight they perceived a brilliant revolving light, and pulled for six hours towards it. But the sea was getting up, and the men, who had no food, were utterly exhausted, and the boat made no progress.

"Seeing the condition we were in," says Miss Smith, "M. Strybus said : 'You have roused their energies on two occasions ; try again.' I then cheered them on ; but as their hands were almost scarified from their laborious exertions, it was almost impossible for them to row. They, however, made another effort, and soon after we observed a light in another direction. We did not know what it was, but the men at once resolved to make a last push ; and shortly after their exertions

were rewarded by reaching a Dutch galliot, the captain of which, who had previously fallen in with the other boat, kindly took us on board, and at once made for Brest, where we arrived at four o'clock on Monday afternoon. Altogether we were thirty hours in the small boat, during the whole of which anxious time there was nothing either to eat or drink ; but, notwithstanding, the gallant fellows who had so laboriously exerted themselves to save our lives uttered not a murmur. They were all most kind and attentive to me throughout this trying and distressing scene, but the fireman, Attwood, particularly so ; he kindly bound up my feet in handkerchiefs, and placed something round my head, to protect me as far as was possible from the inclemency of the weather."

A fortnight elapsed, and it seemed that, by the recovery of those who had been rescued by the *Gertruida*, all who had escaped from the burning wreck had been accounted for ; though the more sanguine anticipated the possibility that one or more boats might have been picked up by outward-bound vessels, and carried on to their port of destination. But on the 16th January, thirteen more of the passengers of the *Amazon* arrived at Plymouth. These persons (among whom was Lieutenant Grylls) had been picked up in the port lifeboat on the evening of the disaster by the Dutch galliot *Hellechina*, and by her put on board an English revenue cutter at the entrance of the Channel.

The narrative of Lieutenant Grylls conveys the only information respecting Captain Symons. On rushing on deck, Lieutenant Grylls saw the captain using great exertions to save as many people as possible ; he attempted in vain to prevent the people lowering the boats until the engines could be stopped. Lieutenant Grylls was holding the after fall of the cutter, when the man at the fore-tackle let it go, and all in her were tilted out ; he turned his face in horror from the appalling sight. Captain Symons then called him to his assistance to lower the port lifeboat ; but while so engaged the flames reached the boat, and burnt the hair from his head ; he was obliged to run aft, rushing through smoke and flame. When

Lieutenant Grylls last saw the captain, he was giving orders for the safety of the ladies. Lieutenant Grylls threw himself into a boat (one of those which had been previously swamped) and got her clear of the burning ship, but with a large hole stove in her bows. One of the seamen took off his drawers and there-with stopped the hole. About 3 a.m. a barque passed between them and the burning wreck, but did not perceive the boat, and when day broke no ship was in sight. They passed over the spot where the *Amazon* had sunk; they saw large pieces of wreck, chests, boxes, pieces of the ship, and one of her masts; the water for a large space was covered with oil, which prevented the sea from breaking, but they could perceive no person, living or dead. At midday they saw a sail in the distance, and paddled after her with pieces of wood—for they had no oars—but she steered away. In the afternoon they perceived another vessel and managed to intercept her course. They were most hospitably received by the captain, Mr. Gruppelaar, having been fifteen hours on a rough sea without bread, water, or anything to make use of.

One of the *Amazon's* boats, with no one in her, was washed ashore on the coast of England, and the circumstances gave rise to hopes that her crew had been taken out of her and might yet survive. It is probable, however, that this was the boat picked up by the *Marsden*, which had broken away during a heavy gale. No more of the crew or passengers of the *Amazon* were ever heard of, and the sad result is summed up as follows:

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Saved by the <i>Marsden</i> | 21 |
| " " <i>Gertruida</i> | 25 |
| " " <i>Hellechina</i> | 13 |
| | <hr/> 59 |
| Lost | 102 |
| Total number on board on sailing | <hr/> 161 <hr/> |

[This account is taken from the Annual Register: the incident naturally attracted a great deal of public attention at the time, and a large sum was raised for the relatives of the men who lost their lives. —ED.]

“JUST SCRAPED CLEAR!”

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

IT was in the summer following the tragic affair of Bunker Frost, that we very nearly came to grief in the *Panther*—so nearly, in fact, that each one of us felt that he had, indeed, been face to face with death.

After refitting at Hong Kong, we were ordered north to Yokohama, calling at Chefoo—or Cheefoo, or Chifu; it is spelt in several different ways on the maps—to transfer some men to a ship which was lying there. Perhaps you don't know where Cheefoo is? Well, it is nearly opposite Port Arthur, which became so notorious during the war between Russia and Japan a few years ago, and not far from the mouth of the great Peiho River.

We were glad enough to get out of Hong Kong, which is a very disagreeable place in summer, and we had an easy and pleasant passage to Cheefoo, arriving off there late one evening; and here we had, to begin with, a very narrow shave.

The anchorage is in a shallow bay, with an island to guard it, upon which there is a lighthouse; and as we steamed in, about ten o'clock on a dark night, the navigator somehow got wrong, and instead of steering between the island and the rocky point, he was making straight for the face of a cliff, about a couple of hundred feet in height, with detached rocks at its base.

Fortunately, he discovered his error just in time—discovered it, in fact, by suddenly losing sight of the light on the island, which could only mean that it was shut in by the cliff and the rocky headland! Scarcely were the engines stopped and the

helm put hard over, when the boatswain, on the forecandle, shouted that he saw breakers close ahead; in another minute we all saw them, and heard them, too, very plainly. As the ship swung round we could see the swell breaking against the cliff, throwing up masses of foam, which glimmered in the darkness. However, a miss is as good as a mile, and we steamed quietly into the anchorage, and said nothing to any one about our little scare. We were destined to have a bigger one before many days had passed.

On the 15th of August we left Cheefoo for Yokohama; our course lay nearly south-east to the south point of Japan, and then about north-east, along the coast, to our destination. Now, there is to the southward of Japan just there, a string of islands, and some rocky shoals, and the largest island, at the eastern extremity of the string, lies just off the south-east point of Japan, about twenty miles distant from it, forming a strait, through which we had to pass. It is a long, narrow island, about thirty miles in length, and at its northern extremity, bordering the strait, there are some outlying rocks—it is named Tanega Island, and you will find it clearly marked upon any decent map of Japan.

We got along all right until the morning of the 19th, when we were approaching these islands, though the weather for a couple of days had been very unpleasant—close and muggy, with a great deal of rain, and the wind shifting about in a manner which seamen very appropriately term “baffling.” It was sometimes sufficiently favourable for us to make sail, but after an hour or two it would suddenly shift ahead, and we had to furl sails in a hurry, in drenching rain; so by this morning of the 19th we had got rather sick of it, and kept the sails furled to save trouble.

And now, just when we wanted it clear, to see our way past the islands, it came on to rain very thickly, so that we could not see more than a mile or so, and the navigator was fidgeting about on the bridge, taking measurements on the chart, and not improving it by the drippings from his sou’wester hat, and constantly staring at the place where the nearest island ought

to be ; a small island, and the only one which was really in our path.

As we had not seen the sun for more than forty-eight hours, and so had got no observations to determine our position, there was considerable excuse for our navigator's anxiety ; the island might very well be in a totally different position from that which our reckoning gave it ; we might have run past it, or it might be dead ahead, waiting for us in the thickness.

However, just at noon we had a slice of luck, the rain cleared off a bit, and there was our friend, not at all in the right place—at least, the island was all right, not being likely to shift about, but the ship was all wrong ; so we altered our course, and steered pretty close round the south side of it, which gave the navigator a fresh starting-point, and he was quite happy.

Then the weather became very queer indeed, a stiffish easterly breeze got up, right in our teeth, the sky and sea were a dirty mud-colour ; but the queerest thing of all was, that small, inky-looking clouds came sailing up from the southward, at right angles to the direction of the wind, and rained upon us as they passed over ; a thick, soaking rain, whereas there was little or none in between. The wind freshened up, and we put more steam on as the evening approached, dusk setting in prematurely under the dense, threatening sky.

After midnight the captain told the officer of the watch to get the topgallantmasts on deck, while the chief engineer got up steam to full speed. A ship like this is very bad at steaming against a breeze, as the heavy spars and rigging hold such a lot of wind, and we were not going very fast through the water ; but we had the satisfaction of knowing that a strong easterly current runs through the strait, which was helping us along.*

The light on Cape Chichakoff—or Sato-no-misaki, in Japanese—was dimly seen through the rain during the middle watch ; our progress past it was discouragingly slow. We wanted to get through the strait, which has a reputation for bad weather, and

* An *easterly* current is one which runs *towards* the east ; an easterly wind, on the contrary, blows *from* the east, so that the two are in opposition to one another.—ED.

when daylight came we had no cause for being better satisfied with our position, while the weather was distinctly ugly—there was no other name for it.

The wind was coming in fierce, sudden squalls, screaming through the rigging and dying away with a weird, moaning sound, which sent a cold shiver down one's back. The air was filled with a dense watery vapour, through which the land was only occasionally visible, while fragments of black scud, torn and riven into fantastic forms, kept tearing across the leaden sky in ever-varying directions; and there we stuck in the jaws of the strait, with that long, lean, objectionable island to the southward of us. The ship was steaming pretty nearly all she knew, but we did not appear to make much progress.

And then, about half-past nine, came realisation; the wind came from N.N.E., bursting upon the ship with indescribable fury, knocking up like magic a big sea, which dealt sharp, hammer-like blows upon the side. The ship lay over to starboard at a steep angle, with the lee quarter-boats sometimes almost immersed; the crests of the seas, torn off before they were well formed, and driven in a hissing mass before the blast, mingled with the drenching rain, rendering it impossible to look to windward, or see a ship's length in any direction; and then the noise—the awful, deafening, malignant scream of the storm through the rigging, swelling yet louder with fiendish exultation as the ship recovered from a heavy lurch, and the masts swept up to windward.

Realisation came upon us: we were involved in a typhoon—the cyclone of the China seas—and we were on a *lee shore*, or very nearly so; and the current setting through the strait would carry us along just *dead* to windward of that rocky island.

Probably we ought to have known sooner what was coming; but the barometer, though it was decidedly low, had not fallen with such rapidity as to make us fear this outcome. Now, indeed, it went down like mad, and there was no doubt about what we were in for.

The wind, coming from this quarter, had caught the ship on the port bow, and the helm being put hard a-starboard

in the endeavour to maintain the course kept her, by virtue of the full speed of the screw, roughly in that position; but we had to consider what was the best thing to do. There are certain things which can be done in a cyclone, according to established rules, in order to avoid the centre, and get out of it as cheaply as you can.

I am not going into all the detail of this business, which would take too long; but, as a matter of fact, the proper thing to do, situated as we were with regard to the centre, was to “lie to” on the port tack; and this was precisely what we were doing, in a way, though we had no sail on her.

But when you have the land under your lee it naturally alters the aspect of affairs, and you may have to do something else to get out of the mess, even at the risk of serious damage to the ship and possible loss of life. Well, there was absolutely *nothing* that we could do. Had Tanega been the only island we might perhaps have run before the wind for a time, so as to get to leeward of it, and lay to again; but there were two more islands and several rocky shoals right in the way. To run would be courting almost certain destruction. Nor dare we wear the ship round on the other tack, for the same reason—we should have danger close to leeward of us just the same; and the starboard, moreover, is the “dangerous” tack in this quarter of the storm, as the wind keeps on heading the ship. We could do nothing, except set a rag of a storm-sail on the mizenmast to help to keep the ship up to the wind. This was done, and it stood wonderfully, and then we could only wait and see what would happen.

Had there been no land about we should have been perfectly happy, for the *Panther* was a fine sea-boat; as it was, going dead to leeward as we were in spite of steam and helm, we were drifting helplessly on a rocky headland, where the ship would go to pieces in five minutes, and no amount of pricking at the chart, which most of us had a go at, would bring any consolation.

Have you ever read “The Hunting of the *Snark*”? If so, you will recollect how the crew, consisting of a butcher, a

billiard-marker, and a beaver, congratulated themselves upon the sagacity of the bellman, their skipper, in the matter of providing a suitable chart.

Some charts are such shapes, with their islands and capes,
But we have our good captain to thank,
So the crew would protest, that he's bought us the best,
A perfect and absolute blank !

Those amusing verses were not written at that time, or I am sure we should have thought about that chart. How we should have appreciated a similar one ! "Islands and capes" we had in plenty, and could well have dispensed with them.

However, it is not customary in the navy to pull a long face over prospective perils. A little knot of officers is clustered under the bridge on the weather side, chatting—or shouting, perhaps, is the better word, for you can't be heard short of that—as if there was nothing very much to be concerned about ; but they glance over the lee bulwarks pretty constantly as the ship lurches heavily ; over the bulwarks, and over the boats at the lee davits as they show up suddenly against a background of foam, then swing back again as the ship partially recovers.

There are four men at the wheel, where one usually suffices, but they can only keep the helm "hard down," and that does not always keep her from falling off from the wind. Frequently a sea strikes the bow, and flies over the ship in a dense mass of foam. The funnel is snow-white already with encrusted salt, the topmasts, bare of sail as they are, bend over considerably with the pressure, ropes stream away aloft, torn loose by the furious blast.

By noon the barometer had fallen to 28.50 ; but the wind was slowly drawing round to north ; a good sign, for it shows that the centre is no longer nearing us. If we can only hold our ground sufficiently until the wind goes down !

The officer of the watch, with bare feet, a waterproof down to his ankles, and his sou'wester tied on with a rope yarn, clings to the bridge rail, with difficulty retaining his position.

The captain, similarly attired, stands with the navigator on the bridge ladder, looking over to leeward.

Lunch-time, but there is not much comfort in the ward-room. The table has “fetched away” to leeward, and the chairs are tumbling over one another against the cabin bulkheads. The Chinese servants are sea-sick and frightened; the little steward, with his cadaverous countenance and long pig-tail, for once unkempt, presenting a comical picture of misery.

We get a snack, and hurry on deck again—somehow no one cares about stopping below, until—well, until we either know we are clear, or *find that we are not*. Where is that island?

The wind held on at full strength until about four o’clock. The ship, behaving splendidly, had received no damage worth mentioning. One of the boats to windward had been partly swung inboard by the pressure of the wind, and those to leeward had some of the gear washed out of them; and now the glass was rising slowly, and the stress and turmoil of the storm plainly abating; still, we could not see half a ship’s length to leeward.

The direction of the wind was now a little to the westward of north, the ship’s head about N.E.bE., or sometimes N.E.; suddenly the wind moderated considerably, dropping to a “fresh gale”—every eye was fixed to leeward as the gloom lightened sensibly—some looked nearly ahead, others abeam or on the quarter; a number of the blue-jackets had climbed on the boom-boats, before the mainmast, for the situation was known throughout the ship—others clustered, mounting on various projections, along the lee bulwarks.

The wind dropped again; all the force had gone out of it, and the sky was lifting to the south-west; the ship’s head, under the helm and steam, came more round to the northward, the stormsail fluttering a little; the rain almost ceases, the salt spume settles down.

And then a sudden exclamation—a groan—a shout—resounds throughout the deck.

Close aboard, all along the starboard beam, the huge seas

are thundering on a rocky coast ; on outlying rocks, nearer still ; one of them terribly close on the bow. The weight of the sea is lifting the ship bodily on to the breakers ; heaving, rolling, pitching, she makes no way ; her bows are thrust under, and she comes up without the jib-boom. No one heeds it at the moment—a jib-boom ! What is that when *death* is at hand ?

For so it seems ; nothing can save her. Appalled, all hands look on, awaiting the first stroke on the rocks. Some of the men commence to strip, in the hope of somehow reaching the shore—a forlorn hope indeed ! The seas are crashing with irresistible force upon the rocks ; no vessel could hold together for ten minutes once she struck ; no man could hope to get out of it alive.

While a few seconds pass—scarcely more, though it appears much longer—we gaze ; then the captain, a thorough seaman, issues orders :

“Brail up the stormsail ! Keep the helm hard-a-star-board !”

He whirls round the handle of the engine-room telegraph—
“full speed astern !”

Nobody knows what is in his mind, but a number of men fly to obey, headed by an officer or two—in half a minute the little storm sail is gathered close up to the mast.

The captain stands immovable, his hand on the telegraph, his eye on the ship's head.

What is happening ?

“Clear away the foretopmast staysail !”

The forecastlemen are out like a flash on the bowsprit—the ship's head is falling off towards the rocks, and the breakers seem almost underfoot ; but the men are cool and prompt—the sail is cast loose—“all ready, sir !”

“Keep it fast !” cries the captain, raising his hand—“man the storm mizen-sheet !”

A big sea comes over the quarter, and the men abaft are up to their knees for a minute or two. The ship's head is dead on for the shore ; but she gets no closer ; another sea abaft—there is little wind now ; it comes astern—the sheet of

the storm sail is quickly shifted over by order of the first lieutenant, who begins to comprehend what the captain is driving at.

The wind comes round on the starboard quarter; but the breakers are right under the bows—it seems impossible that she can go clear.

"Haul aft!" says the captain, his hand still on the telegraph. The next sea comes broad on the quarter, and heaves her stern inshore—there is a stifled cry from the men—is she done for?

Round goes the handle of the telegraph again—"full speed ahead!"

"Reverse the helm! Hard-a-port!" is the order—and the wheel flies round.

The sail is set in a moment, and fills; and then the ship's company realise that the ship has been saved by a miracle of good seamanship and presence of mind.

As the screw drives ahead and the sail exerts some pressure, the ship, without gaining ground ahead, flies round from the danger; another minute and she is heading diagonally away from the rocks; plunging her forecastle under, she gathers a little headway; slowly, labouring in the seas, she crawls away, coming gradually up to the wind. The sky lifts; a bright arch rises to the south-west, and suddenly a brilliant gleam of sunshine comes through; the furious, lashing surf glitters in it. We are safe!

The captain turns to the first lieutenant with a smile, though he is very pale:

"Near thing! As soon as we are well clear, we must stop and get that jib-boom in."

And the bluejackets suddenly break out into a loud cheer—a spontaneous, thrilling recognition of the captain's noble courage and consummate seamanship. It brings tears to our eyes; we all join in, waving our hats. The captain unties the rope-yarn under his chin, and takes off his sou'-wester, gravely acknowledging the splendid compliment.

It was the only thing that could have saved us—a desperate chance—but it succeeded, and by-and-by the engines were

put dead slow, while the boatswain and a lot of men got the wreck of the jib-boom in ; then, later on, we shaped our course for Yokohama.

It was a treat to go on deck that night, for the middle watch, and find the old craft churning merrily along through the still agitated sea, in the bright moonlight, the dark shadows shifting silently about the deck as she rolled, and the heavy wash from her bows rushing off, as she came plunging down with a noise and fuss quite disproportioned to her speed : and the basin of hot coffee, and basket of smoking baked potatoes, produced in due course from the stokehold by the young midshipman of the watch, were discussed with a deliberate relish, compatible only with a sense of complete security.

NOTE.—A little explanation of the seamanship may interest you : if not, you can skip it.

When the *Panther* lay close to the island, which was on her starboard side, she had the wind and sea on her *port* bow : the wind, of course, had almost subsided : the helm had been hard-a-starboard all the afternoon—that is, hard over to keep her head up to *port*, against the wind and sea—and the engines were still going ahead. The captain saw in a moment that she would never come round to port, against the sea, in time to clear the danger—she would have drifted on shore had he waited for that : so he determined to bring her round the way she *would* go—just as Captain Hayes, of the *Magnificent*, did with his sailing ship.

By going full speed *astern*, and keeping the helm the same way, the captain knew that the ship's head would rapidly fall off from the wind—for a moment he thought of setting the foretopmast staysail to help her round, but he thought better of it ; the storm mizen would retard her in going off, so it was taken in : when the wind came on the *other* side of the stern—the starboard side—it would help her round : directly the captain found the wind and sea coming on the starboard quarter, though the ship's head still pointed towards the rocks, he put the engines ahead and the helm over the other way, knowing that the “race,” or water thrown backward from the screw, would act on the rudder and bring her head round before she got any way on—and the storm sail assisted. When the wind had once crossed the stern, the ship, under the influence of the steam and helm, would fly round very quickly up to a certain point, quite sufficient to put her head well clear ; and the wind which was on the port bow before, would not now be setting her so dead on shore—so she would slowly draw clear of danger.—ED.

THE CREW OF THE "HORNET"

IN the year 1866 the *Hornet*, an American vessel, was destroyed by fire in the Pacific Ocean, the crew getting away in the boats. The correspondent of an American paper gives the following account of their experiences, obtained from one of the number :

In the few minutes' time allowed him Captain Mitchell was only able to seize upon the few articles of food and other necessities that happened to lie about the cabin. Here is the list : 4 hams, 7 pieces of salt pork (each piece weighed about 4 lb.), 1 box of raisins, 100 lb. of bread (about 1 barrel), 12 2-lb. cans of oysters, clams, and assorted meats ; 6 buckets of raw potatoes (which rotted so fast they got but little benefit from them), a keg with 4 lb. of butter in it, 12 gallons of water in a 40-gallon tierce or "scuttle-butt," 4 one-gallon demijohns full of water, 3 bottles of brandy, the property of passengers, some pipes, matches, and 100 lb. of tobacco ; had no medicines. That was all these poor fellows had to live upon for forty-three days—the whole thirty-one of them. Each boat had a compass, a quadrant, a copy of "Bowditch's Navigation," and a nautical almanac, and the captain's and and chief mate's boats had chronometers. Of course, all hands were put on short allowance at once. The day they set sail from the ship each man was allowed a small morsel of salt pork—or a little piece of potato, if he preferred it—and half a sea-biscuit three times a day. To understand how very light this ration of bread was, it is only necessary to know that it takes seven of these sea biscuits to weigh a pound.

The first two days they only allowed one gill of water a day

to each man ; but for nearly a fortnight after that the weather was lowering and stormy, and frequent rain squalls occurred. The rain was caught in canvas, and whenever there was a shower the 40-gallon cask and every other vessel that would hold water was filled—even all the boots that were water-tight were pressed into this service, except those in which the matches and tobacco were deposited to keep dry. So for fourteen days there were luxurious occasions when there was plenty of water to drink. But after that they suffered the agonies of thirst for four long weeks.

For seven days the boats sailed on, and the starving men ate their fragment of biscuit and morsel of raw pork in the morning, and hungrily counted the tedious hours until noon and night should bring their repetitions of it. And in the long intervals they looked mutely in each other's faces, or turned their wistful eyes across the wild sea, in search of the succouring sail that was never to come.

"Didn't you talk?" I asked one of the men.

"No! we were too down-hearted, that is, the first week or more. We didn't talk: we only looked at each other or over the ocean." And thought, I suppose: thought of home, of shelter from storms, of food, and drink, and rest.

The hope of being picked up hung to them constantly: was ever present to them and in their thoughts, like hunger. And in the captain's mind was the hope of making the Clarion Islands, and he clung to it many a day.

The nights were very dark. They had no lantern, and could not see the compass, and there were no stars to steer by. Thomas said of the boat: "She handled easy, and we steered by the feel of the wind in our faces, and the heave of the sea." Dark and dismal and lonesome work was that. Sometimes they got a fleeting glimpse of the sailor's friend, the north star, and then they lighted a match and hastened anxiously to see if their compass was faithful to them, for it had to be placed close to an iron ring-bolt in the stern, and they were afraid, during those first nights, that this might cause it to vary. It proved true to them, however.

On the fifth day a notable incident occurred. They caught a dolphin, and while their enthusiasm was still at its highest over this stroke of good fortune, they captured another. They made a trifling fire in a tin plate and warmed the prizes—to cook them was not possible—and divided them equally among all hands and ate them. On the sixth day two more dolphins were caught. Two more were caught on the seventh day, and also a small bonita, and they began to believe they were always going to live in this extravagant way; but it was not to be—these were their last dolphins, and they never could get another bonita, though they saw them and longed for them often afterwards. On the eighth day the rations were reduced about one-half. Thus—breakfast, one-fourth of a biscuit, an ounce of ham, and a gill of water to each man; dinner, the same quantity of bread and water, and four oysters or clams; supper, water and bread the same, and twelve large raisins or fourteen small ones to a man. Also during the first twelve or fifteen days, each man had one spoonful of brandy a day; then it gave out.

This day, as one of the men was gazing across the dull waste of waters as usual, he saw a small dark object rising and falling upon the waves. He called attention to it, and in a moment every eye was bent upon it in intensest interest. When the boat had approached a little nearer, it was discovered to be a small green turtle, fast asleep. Every noise was hushed as they crept upon the unconscious slumberer. Directions were given and hopes and fears expressed in guarded whispers. At the fateful moment, a moment of tremendous consequences to these famishing men, the expert selected for the high and responsible office stretched forth his hand, while his excited comrades bated their breath and trembled for the success of the enterprise, and seizing the turtle by the hind leg, hauled him on board. His delicate flesh was carefully divided among the party, and eagerly devoured, after being warmed, like the dolphins which preceded him.

The eighteenth day was a memorable one to the wanderers on the lonely sea. On that day the boats parted company.

The captain said that separate from each other there were three chances for the saving of some of the party, where there could but be one chance if they kept together. The captain told the mates he was still going to try to make the Clarion Islands, and that they could imitate his example if they thought best, but he wished them freely to follow the dictates of their own judgment in the matter.

At eleven o'clock in the forenoon, the boats were all cast loose from one another, and then, as friends part from friends whom they expect to meet no more in life, all hands hailed with a fervent "God bless you, boys, good-bye," and the two cherished sails drifted away and disappeared from the longing gaze that followed them so sorrowfully. On the afternoon of this eventful day two "boobies" were caught—a bird about as large as a duck, but all bones and feathers, not as much meat as there is on a pigeon; not nearly so much, the men say. They ate them raw, bones, entrails, and everything; no single morsel was wasted; they were carefully apportioned among the fifteen men. No fire could be built for cooking purposes: the wind was so strong and the sea ran so high that it was all a man could do to light his pipe.

On the morning of the twenty-first day, while some of the crew were dozing on the thwarts and others were buried in reflection, one of the men suddenly sprang to his feet and cried, "A sail! A sail!" Of course, sluggish blood bounded then, and eager eyes were turned to seek the welcome vision. But disappointment was as usual their portion. It was only the chief mate's boat drifting across their path after three days' absence. In a short time the two parties were abreast each other, and within hailing distance. They talked for twenty minutes: the mate reported "all well" and then sailed away, and they never saw him afterwards.

On the 24th day, Captain Mitchell took an observation, and found that he was in latitude 16 degrees north, and longitude 117 degrees west, about one thousand miles from where his vessel was burnt. The hope he had cherished so long that he would be able to make the Clarion Islands

deserted him at last ; he could only go before the wind, and he was now obliged to attempt the best thing the south-east trades could do for him—blow him to the "American Group" or the Sandwich Islands—and therefore he reluctantly and with many misgivings turned his prow towards those distant Archipelagoes.

What these men suffered during the next three weeks no mortal man may hope to describe. Their stomachs and intestines felt to the grasp like a couple of small tough balls, and the gnawing hunger pains and the dreadful thirst that was consuming them in those burning latitudes became almost insupportable. And yet, as the men say, the captain said funny things and talked cheerful talk until he got them to converse freely, and then they used to spend hours together describing delicious dinners they had eaten at home, and earnestly planning interminable and preposterous bills of fare for dinners they were going to eat on shore, if they ever lived through their troubles to do it, poor fellows. The captain said plain bread and butter would be good enough for him all the days of his life if he could only get it. But the saddest things were the dreams they had. An unusually intelligent young sailor, named Cox, said : "In those long days and nights we dreamed all the time—not that we ever slept, I don't mean—no, we only sort of dozed, three-fourths of the faculties awake and the other benumbed into the counterfeit of slumber. Oh, no : some of us never slept for twenty-three days, and no man ever saw the captain asleep for upwards of thirty. But we barely dozed that way and dreamed—and always of such feasts ! Bread and fowls and meat, everything a man could think of, piled upon long tables, and smoking hot ! And we sat down and seized upon the first dish within our reach, like ravenous wolves, and carried it to our lips ; and then we woke and found the same starving comrades about us, and the vacant sky and the desolate sea !" These things are terrible even to think of.

On the 28th day the rations were one teaspoonful of bread-crumbs, and about an ounce of ham for the morning meal, a

spoonful of bread crumbs alone for the evening meal, and one gill of water three times a day. A kitten would perish eventually under such sustenance. Four little flying fish, the size of the sardines of these latter days, flew into the boat on the night of the 28th day. They were divided among the hands and devoured raw. On the 29th day they caught another, and divided it into fifteen pieces—less than a teaspoonful apiece. On the 30th they caught a third flying fish, and gave it to the revered old captain—a fish of the same poor little proportions as the others, four inches long—a present a king might be proud of under the circumstances, a present whose value, in the eyes of the men who offered it, was not to be found in the Bank of England—yea, whose vaults were not able to contain it. The old captain refused to take it; the men insisted; the captain said no, he would take his fifteenth, they must take the remainder. They said in substance, though not in words, that they would see him in Jericho first! So the captain had to eat the fish. On Monday, the 38th day after the disaster, “We had nothing left,” said the third mate, “but a pound and a half of ham—the bone was a good deal the heaviest part of it—and one soup-and-bully tin.” These things were divided among the fifteen men, and they ate it all—two ounces of food to each man. I do not count the ham bone, as that was saved for next day. For some time now the poor wretches had been cutting their old boots into small pieces and eating them. They would also pound wet rags to a sort of pulp and eat them. On the 39th day the ham bone was divided up into rations and scraped with knives and eaten.

I said: “You say the two sick men remained sick all through, and after a while two or three had to be relieved from standing watch; how did you get along without medicines?”

The reply was, “Oh, we couldn’t have kept them if we’d had them; if we’d had boxes of pills, or anything like that, we’d have eaten them. It was just as well: we couldn’t have kept them, and we couldn’t have given them to the

sick men alone, we'd have shared them all round alike, I guess."

It was said rather in jest, but it was a pretty true jest, no doubt. After apportioning the ham bone the captain cut the canvas cover that had been round the ham into fifteen equal pieces, and each man took his portion. This was the last division of food the captain made.

The men broke up the small oaken butter-tub, and divided the staves among themselves and gnawed them up. The shell of the little green turtle before mentioned was scraped with knives and eaten to the last shaving. The third mate chewed pieces of boots and spat them out, but ate nothing except the straps of two pairs of boots—ate three on the thirty-ninth day and saved one for the fortieth. The men seemed to have thought in their minds of the shipwrecked mariner's last dreadful resort—cannibalism; but they do not appear to have conversed about it. They only thought of casting lots and killing one of their number as a possibility; but even while they were eating rags, and bone, and boots, and shell, and hard oak wood, they seem still to have had a notion that it was remote. They felt that some one of the company must die soon—which one they well knew; and during the last three or four days of their terrible voyage they were patiently but hungrily waiting for him. I wonder if the subject of these anticipations knew what they were thinking of? He must have known it—he must have felt it. They had even calculated how long he would last; they said to themselves, but not to each other. I think they said: "He will die on Saturday—and then?" At eleven o'clock on the 15th of June, after suffering all that men may suffer and live for forty-three days in an open boat, on a tropical sea, one of the men feebly shouted the glad tidings, "Land ho!" The "watch below" were lying in the bottom of the boat. What do you suppose they did? They said they had been cruelly disappointed over and over again, and they dreaded to risk another experience of the kind; they could not bear it; they lay still where they were. They said they would not trust to an appearance that might not be land after

all. They would wait. Shortly it proved beyond question that they were almost to land. Then there was joy in the party. One man is said to have swooned away. Another said the sight of the green hills was better to him than a day's rations—a strange figure for a man to use who had been on starvation allowance for forty days and forty nights!

THE DISTRESSES AND DELIVERANCE OF CAPTAIN DAVID HARRISON

This story appeared in the "Annual Register," 1766; said to be from an account published by Captain Harrison.

CAPTAIN DAVID HARRISON commanded a sloop of New York in North America called the *Peggy*. On the 27th of August, 1765, he set sail from that port with a cargo of lumber, pipe-staves, beeswax, fish, and a negro, and arrived safe at Fayal, one of the Azores, or Western Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, belonging to the Portuguese, on the 5th of October following.

Here, having cleared his ship, and got a cargo of wine, brandy, and some other commodities, he set sail for New York on the 24th of the same month, with the negro, who remained unsold, and had fine weather until the 29th, when it began to blow very hard.

The wind increasing, it blew almost one continued storm until the 1st of December, during which time the sails and shrouds were successively blown away; except one shroud on a side, and his mainsail. As in this situation they could make very little way, and all their provisions were exhausted, except bread, of which a small quantity only was left, they came to an allowance of a quarter of a pound a day, with a quart of water, and a pint of wine for each man.

Their ship was now become very leaky, the waves were swelled into mountains by the storm, and the thunder rolled incessantly over their heads in one dreadful peal, almost without intermission.

In this frightful dilemma, either of sinking with the wreck,

or floating her until they perished with hunger, they fell in with two vessels, one from Jamaica for London, the other from New York for Dublin; but, to the unspeakable aggravation of their distress, the weather was so bad that there could be no communication between ship and ship. They saw, therefore, the vessels that would willingly have relieved them gradually disappear, with sensations that were probably more bitter than death itself.

It was now thought necessary that the allowance of bread-and-water to each man, however scanty, should be further contracted. All consented to a regulation, of which they all saw the necessity, and the allowance was lessened by degrees until every morsel of food was exhausted; and only about two gallons of dirty water remained at the bottom of a cask.

The poor fellows, who, while they had any sustenance, continued obedient to the captain, were now driven by desperation to excess; they seized upon the cargo, and because wine and brandy were all they had left, they drank of both until the frenzy of hunger was increased by drunkenness, and exclamations of distress were blended with curses and blasphemy.

The dregs of the water-cask were abandoned to the captain, who, abstaining as much as possible from wine, husbanded them with the greatest economy.

In the midst of these horrors, this complication of want and excess, of distraction and despair, they espied another sail. Every eye was instantly turned towards it and immovably fixed upon it; every one broke out into ecstasies of joy and devotion; devotion among such people, and in such circumstances, naturally deviated into superstition. Some of the company observed that it was Christmas Day, and seemed to think that the season had an influence upon their approaching deliverance, and was appropriated to their temporal as well as their spiritual salvation. A proper signal of distress was hung out, and about eleven o'clock in the forenoon they had the unspeakable satisfaction of being near enough to the ship to communicate their situation.

The weather was now calm, and the captain promised them

such relief as was in his power, which he extended only to some bread, being himself contracted in every other article. This bread, however, he delayed with the most unpromising insensibility to bestow, upon pretence that he was making an observation, which it was necessary to finish; the poor famished wretches therefore waited an hour in the most anxious suspense, yet in perfect confidence of supply; and the captain, being quite exhausted with hunger, fatigue, and infirmity, finding his eyes fail him, and having a severe rheumatism in his knees, went down to rest himself in the cabin.

He expected to hear every moment that the promised biscuit was coming on board; but he had not waited a quarter of an hour before his people came running down with looks of unutterable despair, and told him, in accents scarcely intelligible, that the vessel was making away as fast as she could, without affording them even the little relief which had been promised.

At this terrible intelligence the captain crawled upon deck, and found it was true. The wretch who commanded the vessel had crowded more sail than he had spread before, and in less than five hours was out of sight.

As long as the poor creatures, whom he had deserted to distraction and famine, could retain the least trace of him, they hung about the shrouds, and ran from one part of the ship to the other, with frantic gestures and ghastly looks, to collect more visible signs of distress; they pierced the air with their cries while they could yet be heard, and implored assistance with still louder lamentations as the distance between them increased; but the vessel, under the direction of inexorable inhumanity, pursued its course, and no further notice was taken of their distress.

Captain Harrison, from some principle which he thinks laudable, and upon which, therefore, it is laudable for him to act, has suppressed the name of the man by whom he was treated with this unprovoked and unrelenting barbarity.

The crew, once more deserted and cut off from their last hope, were still prompted by the instinctive love of life to

preserve it as long as was possible. The only living creatures on board besides themselves were two pigeons and a cat ; the pigeons were killed immediately, and divided among them for their Christmas dinner.

The next day they killed their cat, and as there were nine to partake of the repast, they divided her into nine parts, which they disposed by lot.

It would naturally be supposed by those who have suffered only such distress as is common to men, that anxiety, terror, anguish, and indignation, all the passions that upon such a desertion would have contended in the breast, would have taken away at least that appetite which makes food pleasing, even while nature was sinking for want of sustenance ; yet Captain Harrison declares that, the head of this poor cat having fallen to his share, he never in his life ate anything that he thought so delicious.

The next day the people began to scrape the ship's bottom for barnacles, but the waves had beaten off most of those above water, and the men were too weak to hang long over the ship's side. During all this time the poor wretches were drunk, and a sense of their condition seemed to evaporate in execration and blasphemy. While they were continually heating wine in the steerage, the captain subsisted upon the dirty water at the bottom of the cask, half a pint of which, with a few drops of Turlington's balsam, was his whole subsistence for twenty-four hours.

In this condition he waited for death, the approach of which, he says, he could have contemplated without much emotion, if it had not been for the difficulties in which he should have left his wife and child.

He still flattered himself, at intervals, with some random hope that another vessel might come within sight of them, and take them on board ; but the time allotted for the experiment was apparently short, as well because they had nothing to eat, as because the ship was very leaky, and the men were too feeble, and indeed too drunk to keep the water under by working the pumps. They suffered another aggrava-

tion of their calamity, which will scarcely occur to any reader ; as they had devoured every eatable on board, they had neither candle nor oil, and it being the depth of winter, when they had not perfect daylight eight hours out of the twenty-four, they passed the other sixteen in total darkness, except the glimmering light of their fire. Still, however, by the help of their only sail, they made a little way ; but on the 28th of December another storm overtook them, which blew this only sail into rags, and carried it overboard. The vessel now lay quite like a wreck on the water, and was wholly at the mercy of the winds and waves.

How they subsisted from this time to the 13th of January, sixteen days, does not appear. Their biscuit had long been exhausted ; the last bit of meat which they had tasted was their cat, on the 26th of December ; all their candle-fat and oil was devoured before the 28th, and they could procure no barnacles from the ship's side ; yet, on the 13th of January, they were all alive, and the mate, at the head of the people, came in the evening to the captain in his cabin, half drunk indeed, but with sufficient sensibility to express the horror of their purpose in their countenances. They said they could hold out no longer ; that their tobacco was exhausted, that they had eaten up all the leather belonging to the pump, and even the buttons from their jackets, and now they had no means of preventing their perishing together, but casting lots which of them should perish for the sustenance of the rest , they therefore hoped he would concur in the measure, and desired that he would favour them with his determination immediately.

The captain, perceiving they were in liquor, endeavoured to soothe them from their purpose as well as he could, desired they would endeavour to get some sleep, and said that if Providence did not interpose in their favour, he would consult farther on the subject the next morning.

This mild attempt to divert them from their design only rendered them outrageous, and they swore, with execrations of peculiar horror, that what was to be done must be done immediately, but it was indifferent to them whether he

acquiesced or dissented ; and that, though they had paid him the compliment of acquainting him with their resolution, they would compel him to take his chance with the rest ; for general misfortune, they said, put an end to personal distinction.

The captain, not being in a condition to resist, told them that they must do as they pleased, but that he would on no account give orders for the death of the person on whom the lot might fall, nor partake of so horrid a repast.

Upon this they left him abruptly, and went into the steerage ; but in a few minutes they came back and told him that they had taken a chance for their lives, and that the lot had fallen on the negro, who was part of the cargo.

The little time taken to cast the lot, and the private manner of conducting the decision, gave the captain strong suspicions that they had not dealt fairly by the victim. The poor fellow, however, knowing what had been determined against him, and seeing one of the crew loading a pistol to dispatch him, ran to the captain, begging that he would endeavour to save his life. But the captain could only regret his want of power to protect him ; and he saw him the next moment dragged into the steerage, where he was almost immediately shot through the head.

Having made a large fire, they continued busy the principal part of the night with their feast, and did not retire until two in the morning.

About eight o'clock the next day the mate went to the captain to ask his orders about pickling the body. This, the captain says, he considered as an instance of great brutality, and was so much shocked at it that he took up a pistol and swore, in his turn, that he would send his mate after the negro if he did not retire.

As the captain would not give his advice, the crew took care of their provisions without it, and pickled the body.

How the captain subsisted all this time, from the 25th of December to the 17th of January, does not appear ; but as it is certain that total abstinence would have killed him in much

less time, we must suppose the dirty water and drops kept him alive.

Three days later one of the crew, Campbell by name, died raving mad ; but having at the time sufficient food in store, they threw his body overboard. On the next day, the 17th of January, as they were preparing their dinner, they said of the captain :

"Confound him, though he would not consent to our having any meat, let us give him some"; and immediately one of them came into the cabin and offered him a piece.

This offer he rejected with resentment and menaces. The food, he says, he held in horror, but he honestly confesses that sickness had then taken away his desire to eat, and that therefore there was not much merit in his abstinence.

As the negro's carcase was husbanded with severe economy, it lasted the crew, now consisting of six persons, from the 13th to the 26th of January, when they were again reduced to total abstinence, except their wine. This they endured until the 29th, and then the mate again came to the captain, at the head of the people, and told him that it had now become necessary that they should cast lots a second time.

The captain again endeavoured to reason them out of their purpose, but without success ; and therefore, considering that if they managed the lot without him, as they had done before, he might not get fair play, he consented to manage it himself. He therefore called them all into his cabin, where he was in bed, and, having with great difficulty raised himself up, he caused the lots to be drawn in the same manner that the lottery tickets are drawn at the Guildhall.

The lot fell upon one David Flat, a foremast-man. The shock of the decision was so great that the whole company remained silent for a considerable time, and probably would have done so much longer, if the victim himself, who appeared perfectly resigned, had not expressed himself to this effect :

"My dear friends, messmates, and fellow-sufferers, all I have to beg of you is to dispatch me as soon as you did the negro, and to put me to as little torture as possible."

The victim then begged a short time to prepare himself for death, to which his companions most willingly agreed. Flat was greatly respected by the whole ship's company, and during this interval they seemed inclined not to insist upon his life.

As the dreadful moment approached, their compunction increased, and friendship and humanity at length became stronger than hunger and death. They determined that Flat should live, at least, until eleven o'clock the next morning, hoping, as they said, that the Divine goodness would in the meantime open some other source of relief; at the same time they begged the captain to read prayers, a task which, with the utmost effort of his collected strength, he was just able to perform.

As soon as prayers were over, he lay down ready to faint, and the company went immediately to their unfortunate friend Flat. The captain could hear them talk to him with great earnestness and affection, expressing their hopes that God would interpose for his preservation, and assuring him that, though they never yet could catch, or even see a fish, yet they would put out all their hooks again to try if any relief could be procured.

Poor Flat, however, could derive little comfort from the concern they expressed, and it is not improbable that their expressions of friendship and affection increased the agitation of his mind; such, however, it was as he could not sustain; for before midnight he grew almost totally deaf, and by four o'clock in the morning he was raving mad.

His messmates, who discovered the alteration, debated whether it would not be an act of humanity to dispatch him immediately, but the first resolution of sparing him until eleven prevailed.

About eight in the morning, as the captain was ruminating in his cabin on the fate of this unhappy wretch who had but three hours to live, two of his people came hastily down with uncommon ardour in their looks, and seizing both his hands, fixed their eyes upon him without saying a syllable. The cap-

tain, who recollected that they had thrown Campbell's body overboard, notwithstanding their necessities, for fear of catching his madness, now apprehending that being afraid to eat Flat for the same reason, they were come to sacrifice him in his stead, disengaged himself by a sudden effort, and snatching up his pistol stood upon his defence. The poor men, guessing his mistake, made shift to tell him that their behaviour was merely the effect of surprise and joy, that they had discovered a sail, and that the sight had so overcome them, they were unable to speak.

The rest of the crew came down immediately afterwards, and confirmed the report of a sail, but said that she seemed to bear away from them upon a contrary course.

The account of a vessel being in sight of signals, on whatever course she steered, struck the captain with such excessive and tumultuous joy that he was very near expiring under it. As soon as he could speak, he directed his people to make every possible signal of distress; the ship itself, indeed, was a signal of the most striking kind, but he was apprehensive that the people at a distance might conclude there was nothing alive on board, and so stand away without coming near it.

His orders were obeyed with the utmost alacrity, and as he lay in his cabin, he had the inexpressible happiness of hearing them jumping on deck, and crying out, "She nighs us! She nighs us! She is standing this way!"

The approach of the ship being more and more manifest every moment, their hope naturally increased; but in the midst of this joy they remembered their unfortunate shipmate, Flat, and regretted that he could not be made sensible of his approaching deliverance. Their passions, however, were still characteristic, and they proposed a can of joy to be taken immediately. This the captain with great prudence strenuously opposed, and at length, though with some difficulty, convinced them that their deliverance in a great measure depended upon the regularity of that moment's behaviour.

All but the mate, therefore, gave up the can, which would have made them very drunk before the vessel came up

with them, and he disappeared to take the can of joy by himself.

After continuing to observe the progress of the vessel for some hours, with all the tumult and agitation of mind that such a suspense could not fail to produce, they had the mortification to find the gale totally die away, so that the vessel was becalmed at two miles distance ; they did not, however, suffer long by this accident, for in a few minutes they saw the boat put out from the ship's stern, and row towards them full manned, and with vigorous dispatch. As they had been twice before confident of deliverance, and disappointed, and as they still considered themselves tottering on the verge of eternity, the conflict between their hopes and fears, during the approach of the boat may easily be conceived by a reader of imagination.

At length, however, she came alongside, but the appearance of the crew was so ghastly, that the men rested upon their oars, and, with looks of inconceivable astonishment, asked what they were.

Being at length satisfied, they came on board, and begged the people to use the utmost expedition in quitting the wreck, lest they should be overtaken by a gale of wind, that would prevent them getting back to their ship.

The captain being unable to stir, they lifted him out of his cabin, and let him down into the boat by ropes, and his people followed him, with poor Flat still raving, and they were just putting off, when one of them observed that the mate was wanting ; he was immediately called to, and the can of joy had just left him power to crawl to the gunwale with a look of idiot astonishment, having to all appearance forgotten everything that had happened.

Having with some difficulty got the poor drunken creature on board, they rowed away, and in about an hour reached the ship.

She was the *Susannah*, of London, in the Virginia trade, commanded by Captain Thomas Evers, and was returning from Virginia to London.

The captain received them with the greatest tenderness and humanity, promising to lie by the wreck until next morning

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that he might, if possible, save some of Captain Harrison's clothes; the wind, however, blowing very hard before night, he was obliged to quit her, and she probably, with her cargo, went to the bottom before morning.

The *Susannah* proceeded on her voyage; and though she was herself in a shattered condition, and so short of provisions as to be obliged to reduce her people to short allowance, she reached the Land's End about the 2nd of March; from the Land's End she proceeded to the Downs, and Captain Harrison, a day or two afterwards, proceeded to London by land.

The mate, James Doud, who shot the negro, and one Warner, a seaman, died during the passage; Lemuel Ashley, Samuel Wentworth, and David Flat that was to have been shot for food arrived alive; Flat continued mad during the voyage, and whether he afterwards recovered we are not told. When Captain Harrison came on shore he made the proper attestation of the facts related in this narrative upon oath, in order to secure his insurers; and the whole is so authenticated that it would be folly to doubt of its truth.

THE AFFAIR OF THE "SCIPIO"

BY COMMANDER E. P. STATHAM, R.N.

"O H, yes. I was in the *Scipio* affair," said Holditch, filling his pipe ; " it's a good many years ago now, isn't it ? Most of you fellows couldn't have entered the service then, and some of you weren't born."

" Well, you needn't swagger because you happen to have been born in 'eighteen hundred and war-time,'" said Galton, who was his host and old shipmate ; " you hadn't anything to say to the arrangement at the time, you know."

The others laughed, and Holditch joined in good-naturedly. He was a retired captain of mature years, and was the guest for a day or two of Galton, fleet paymaster of the flagship of the Channel Fleet. They had assembled for the usual smoke after dinner, and the conversation had turned upon naval mistakes and disasters of the past, in which the story of the end of the *Scipio* bore a prominent part with those who were acquainted with the details ; these were, however, comparatively few, for the incident had occurred, as Holditch said, five-and-twenty years or more previously.

" What was the *Scipio* affair ? " asked the commander, a young man for his rank. " I seem to know that there was something rum about it, but I'm quite vague about the nature of it."

" Well, spin us the yarn, Holditch," said Galton ; " it's an interesting story, and I know you are a good hand at a yarn. You played rather a prominent part in it, if I'm not mistaken."

" Yes, do," said one or two others.

"All right. I'll defer my pipe," said Holditch, who was rather fond of recounting his experiences, which had, indeed, been somewhat remarkable.

"To begin at the beginning, which is always a good thing to do, the *Scipio* was a paddler, a six-gun sloop. She carried one 110-pounder Armstrong on the forecastle, a 10-inch smooth-bore shell-gun abaft, and four 32-pounders. I was junior of three lieutenants, and the skipper was Joe Baxter, a very good sort in his way, but not blessed with a very large share of what is called, for want of a better term, I suppose, common sense, though it is, in general estimation, considered somewhat uncommon. We were on the West Indian station, and there was a row in Haiti, not a very unusual thing, for, as you probably know, that delectable island was the scene of periodical revolutions in those days. They seemed never to be able to find a president who pleased all hands, so it was always open to any chap who fancied he could do the job better to start an insurrection on his own account. These little affairs naturally caused some anxiety to the British and other foreign residents. When party feeling ran high in Haiti you could never tell what practical form it would take, and foreigners who were supposed, rightly or wrongly, to be in sympathy with one side were as likely as not to have their throats cut by the other.

"Consequently, Joe Baxter was ordered there to look after British interests, and had a pretty free hand given him in the matter, it being understood, of course, that, failing an entirely successful revolt, we were on the side of recognised authority. We had our consuls there, and a diplomat at Port au Prince, accredited to the existing President.

"The headquarters of the revolutionist party were at Cape Haitien, on the north side of the island, and things were pretty warm there; the anti-President lot had many supporters and considerable funds, and had acquired some war-vessels of sorts, obtained entire possession of the defences of the harbour, and had a good many irregular troops.

"The skipper was in touch with the President and his

ministers, and was naturally regarded with determined animosity by the aspirant and his followers, while the consul and the few British merchants at Cape Haitien were not in any higher favour.

"I don't know that Baxter was a particularly good man for a delicate job of this kind ; but he seemed to manage all right at first, and the *Scipio's* two big guns—there were none heavier afloat at that time—formed a strong argument in case of any display of force being necessary.

"One day in October 186— we left the harbour of Cape Haitien for target practice outside—the usual thing, you know, in those days ; 'Bear a hand and get it over !'—and after we had finished, as we steamed towards Acul Bay, where the ministers had assembled, we saw a steamer, flying British colours, being chased by another and three schooners, all armed, and flying the revolutionary colours. They fired a gun or two at her, but apparently did her no damage, and she was evidently getting away from them.

"Here was obviously occasion for our interference, and we steamed to intercept the little squadron, the English steamer stopping her engines and waiting to see the fun.

"When we closed with the rebel steamer, we fired a blank charge to bring her to, and I was sent on board to demand an explanation from the skipper as to his high-handed proceedings.

"But the skipper wasn't taking any stock in explanations. He spoke English fluently, and was extremely truculent ; declined to give any account of himself, and insisted that he had a right to overhaul the steamer, as she was in the President's employ. His vessel was an ordinary merchant craft, with a few indifferent guns pitchforked on board ; one shell from our Armstrong would have settled her hash, so the skipper's haughty attitude was decidedly entertaining.

"I explained to him that his claim could not be recognised, and that if the other steamer had the right to fly English colours, we should protect her. He was still defiant, so I returned on board to report.

"Meanwhile, the English steamer had closed the *Scipio* and

lowered a boat. She had, it appeared, some letters for us, and from her captain we learned that she was chartered by the President to carry some war-like stores. Baxter looked at her papers, and found they were all right, and while her skipper was returning on board, she being then quite close to us, the rebel steamer, the *Montesuma*, approached and endeavoured to run her on board, and fouled our quarter-boat in doing so.

"This was considerable cheek, and Baxter hailed him to haul off.

" 'I have the right to board her,' replied the captain, 'or you must tell me what she carries.'

" 'I'll tell you nothing about her, except that she is entitled to fly English colours, and if you don't go astern and clear out, I shall take possession of your ship.'

"This was a good reply, and had the desired effect. We waited to see the English vessel safe, and our truculent friend steamed off towards Cape Haitien.

"When we returned there on the following day, we found it had become a regular hornet's nest for English people. The rebels had forcibly taken some refugees—Haitien ladies—from our consulate, the consul and English merchants went in fear of their lives, and when I was sent on shore by Baxter to demand an explanation, I was confronted at the landing-place by a party of soldiers, who refused me permission to land. The skipper of the *Montesuma*, which was anchored close in shore, was very much in evidence, declaiming and threatening, and in fact I was glad to get out of it without a volley from the troops.

"This was getting rather too hot; Baxter used every endeavour to improve matters by diplomacy; but he could get no satisfaction, not even a reply of any kind; so a couple of days later we got the consul on board, and also a British merchant, who found things so unpleasant that he swam off to our ship in the dark, and went round to Acul Bay, which is not far off, to consult with the President's representatives. There was a Yankee man-of-war at Cape Haitien, and her skipper offered to take on board any English and other residents who chose to

go, though he was not taking any active part in the business. I suppose there were no American people there.

"Well, the result of Baxter's palaver at Acul Bay was that he made up his mind to give the beggars a lesson, sink the *Montesuma*, and bombard the batteries. We arrived off Cape Haitien in the afternoon, steamed close into the harbour and had a good look at the position of the *Montesuma*; saw that the batteries were manned ready for us, and lay off for the night, as it was then getting dusk.

"Next morning at eight o'clock we steamed in, cleared for action.

"Port Haitien is a small harbour, with two entrances, one on either side of the shoal, on which a heavy surf beats constantly, and there are other shoals about, but the way in is easy enough, the chart quite reliable. The skipper had made up his mind to sink the *Montesuma* by ramming her, as he did not wish to kill any more of her people than he could help; having done this, his idea was to engage and silence the largest battery on the way out.

"This was all right—a very good programme on the whole, and of course we were all agog for a bit of a fight as we entered the eastern passage.

"And now comes in the most extraordinary part of the business, which nobody has ever been able to understand. Baxter had, of course, told the navigator—poor old Hutchings! I saw him a few months ago—precisely what he wanted. Hutchings was to take the ship in, and when she was clear of the shoals he was to tell the skipper, and head straight for the *Montesuma*. But—will you believe it?—Hutchings had determined his course by the position of the steamer, having taken the bearings of her position and the Yankee's the evening before; and he saw that, having reached a certain point, he could steer directly for the *Montesuma*, which, he assumed, would occupy the same position in the morning.

"Well—we went in, as I said, by the east passage, and Baxter, by way of letting everybody know what to expect, let drive with the two big guns as he went in at the principal

battery—Fort Picolet, I think it was called—on the right, and got a shot or two in return, very well aimed, for they hit us, one passing through the funnel and another smashing the port hammock netting,* but nobody was damaged.

"We were going half-speed at this time, about seven knots—our full speed was under ten—and so we passed by the big shoal and turned a little eastward to avoid another, with a beacon on it.

"'All clear now, sir,' says Hutchings, and the skipper put the engines at full-speed; the helm was altered, and we swung round head on to the *Montesuma*. We had, of course, leadsmen on the paddle-boxes, calling their soundings; it was six or seven fathoms in the fair-way, right up to the steamer.

"Suddenly the starboard leadsman called: 'Mark five!' The other followed in a moment with 'A quarter four!' And we ought to have had at least seven just there!

"'Mark three!' came next—all in a few moments, mind you—and before we could well realise what was up, the *Scipio* piled up on a shoal! I believe the captain put the telegraph at 'stop' just before she struck, but I doubt whether they had time to stop the engines. The ship, with the way she had on, ran well on to the shoal, her bows lifting perceptibly—she was properly beached.

"Here was a pretty mess! And how did it come about? Why, the *Montesuma* had shifted during the night about five hundred yards to the eastward, just inside the elbow of the shoal, and poor old Hutchings, cocksure with his overnight bearings of the *Montesuma* and the Yankee, had depended entirely upon them, neglecting altogether the leading marks on shore which would have cleared him of the shoal, and demonstrated the position of affairs. Whether the skipper of the *Montesuma* scented Baxter's game, and did it on purpose, I don't know; if so, he scored his point, at the moment, to admiration.

"Well, there were ructions then, as you may imagine. We

* The "hammock netting" is not really a "netting," but the top of the bulwarks, which is made double, to hold the hammocks.—ED.

went full-speed astern, of course—and equally of course without result. You don't get off as easy as that when you run on a coral shoal at nine knots.

"Starboard watch remain at quarters! Port watch, out stream anchor and cable!'"*

"Our fellows worked well, and were as cool as cucumbers, though the batteries, of course, opened on us at once, and the *Montesuma* fired a round or two; but Joe Baxter didn't let himself be put off that part of the job—the Armstrong gun quickly landed a couple of shells in her, and down she went; we sent a boat to help in saving the crew. One of the armed schooners was also sunk.

"The stream anchor was laid out under fire by the second lieutenant, the two foremost boilers were run out, the tanks started, and a lot of shot, etc., brought aft. Then we hove in on the stream cable, going astern at the same time, and a lot of hands, each man carrying a thirty-two pound shot, jumped and danced on deck abaft; but it was no go, she was too hard-and-fast on shore.

"The skipper sent me to the Yankee, a big, powerful vessel, to ask her captain to come and lend a hand to get our craft afloat.

"'I reckon I can't do that,' he said; 'I shall be happy to take your wounded on board my ship, if you like.'

"'Thank you, sir,' I replied, 'I dare say we can look after our wounded, and so left him. I could not, and cannot to this day, see why he could not come and give us a tow—we would have done it for them, I'm sure.

"Meanwhile, the batteries were keeping it up, and we had

* The "stream" anchor is a smaller one than those in use for anchoring the ship. It is stowed inboard, in a handy position for hoisting out, and is used on such an occasion as this, being taken in a large boat, with a chain or rope cable attached, and dropped astern of the ship to haul her off the ground with. "Out stream anchor and cable" was a recognised business, for which every man knew his station, and in a smart ship it would be done very quickly—but they had first to hoist out one of the large boats, stowed on the paddle-box, to carry the anchor.—ED.

continued all through to keep some sort of crews at our two big guns, to reply to them. The practice was good on both sides; they hulled us repeatedly, one shot going through a boiler, another damaging the main steam-pipe, and so on. We had a dozen wounded, five or six hopelessly, and some of our spars came rattling down about our ears.

"After our fruitless attempt to float the ship, we got all our guns to bear, and silenced two of the batteries completely; but they kept bringing fresh guns into the other; and when we had dismounted them all, they got field-pieces there, and popped them up to fire, running them under protection of the rampart to load.

"So it went on until dusk—about half-past five they fired their last shot, and things were quiet for the time—what was going to happen next?"

"There's no doubt, in my mind, as to what *ought* to have happened. Our ship drew about fourteen feet of water forward, and there was twelve and a half feet under the bow; under the stern there was four and a half fathoms,* and just beyond there was a good six. We should have turned to that night and lightened her forward, run the big gun aft, hoisted out everything movable, carried all shot, etc., aft, let go both bower anchors, buoyed, without the cables: hauled the cables up out of the chain lockers and ranged them aft—I don't think a bower anchor would have hauled her off as she was, but I do believe that we could have got her sufficiently by the stern to haul her off with the stream and the engines if we had done all that—then we could have anchored with the sheet anchor.

"Of course it would mean incessant work all night; but you can do a lot in twelve hours, and the men I know would have worked like demons. They were a fine lot; never saw a better ship's company.

"At six o'clock Joe Baxter called a council of war—if that is the right name for it under the circumstances!—to discuss the advisability of abandoning and destroying the ship. I

* A fathom, you will remember, being six feet.—ED.

won't worry you with all the arguments he used—one was, that there was a plan to come and take the ship—take the ship! My word, we would have given those chaps some fun if they had attempted it! Then we hadn't much ammunition left; that was another point; and we couldn't possibly get her off, and so on.

"Well, the two other lieutenants and Hutchings, whatever they thought, hadn't the moral courage to oppose the skipper: I'm rather proud to think that I had. He asked us each in turn whether we could devise any better expedient; the others all said no, they couldn't.

"'Well, sir,' I said, when he asked me, 'I must presume to differ from you. I think we ought to have another try at getting her off; and then I told him all I told you just now, and concluded, 'if, after all, we can't, then it'll be time enough to think about blowing her up.'

"But it was no use, he wouldn't listen to me. I don't know what was the matter with him that night, for he was far from being a funk; he was as cool as a cucumber under fire, and I know he was mentioned in dispatches during the Crimean War for his pluck and resource in a crisis of some sort; but nothing would suit him then except deserting the poor old craft and setting her on fire; and very soon the hands were busy with systematic preparations for it.

"All the boats were moored astern in readiness—piles of combustibles, soaked with oil, were put about, each with a fuse and some powder to start it; the powder cases were opened in the magazines, cartridges and spare powder piled up, and a train and match set ready. The ship's books and papers were packed up and put in one of the paddle-box boats—all in a sort of shame-faced silence, for none of us were very proud of it I can tell you; I can see it all now, and hear the roar of the surf coming through the stillness.

"By midnight all was ready; the boats were hauled up alongside, and when they were loaded, all shoved off except the first cutter—some men had been detailed to light the fuses and see that they had caught properly; then they hopped into

the cutter, and we all pulled slowly away for the harbour's mouth.

"In ten minutes we saw the fire flickering up through the open hatches; a minute or two later up went the magazines—a magnificent sight if it had been somebody else's ship! The blazing fragments flew sky-high, the mizen-mast shot up, all standing, a good many feet, then fell, crashing and blazing, over the stern—and the whole ship was one big blaze from stem to stern.

"We pulled round to some place—I forget the name—about eight miles off, and then walked over to Acul Bay. From there the President sent a steamer to Port Royal, and we were afterwards taken off by a vessel specially chartered by the commodore."

Holditch paused and sighed, then proceeded to light his neglected pipe. The recounting of this, to him, shameful incident had evidently moved him a good deal.

"What did the court-martial have to say about it?" asked the commander.

"Nothing very complimentary, you may be sure," said Holditch; "they sentenced Hutchings to be dismissed his ship and lose a lot of seniority; they severely reprimanded the two lieutenants for so readily advising the skipper to abandon the ship; they commended the ship's company and other officers for their good behaviour under trying circumstances——"

"And the captain?"

"Oh, poor Joe Baxter was not there to answer for himself. The court-martial took place at Bermuda, and on the way up, on board the *Flora*, he was found dead in his cabin. Shot himself, poor chap; I suppose he realised too late what he had done."

There was a significant silence of a few minutes, then some one asked:

"And what about the rebels? Did they have it all their own way?"

"Not exactly—we sent the *Acis* and a gun-vessel round there,

and brought the place about their ears. Afterwards we recovered the guns, anchors, and as much stuff as we could from the wreck, and blew the remains into small pieces ; but nothing could atone for poor Joe Baxter's error."

"Queer business!" said the commander, knocking out his pipe and preparing to go the rounds.

"Yes," said Galton, "it's one of the curious stories that belong to the navy, and the sea generally. Many of them will remain for ever untold, and I suppose there are many more waiting to be told. We shall never be through with them until the last day!"





